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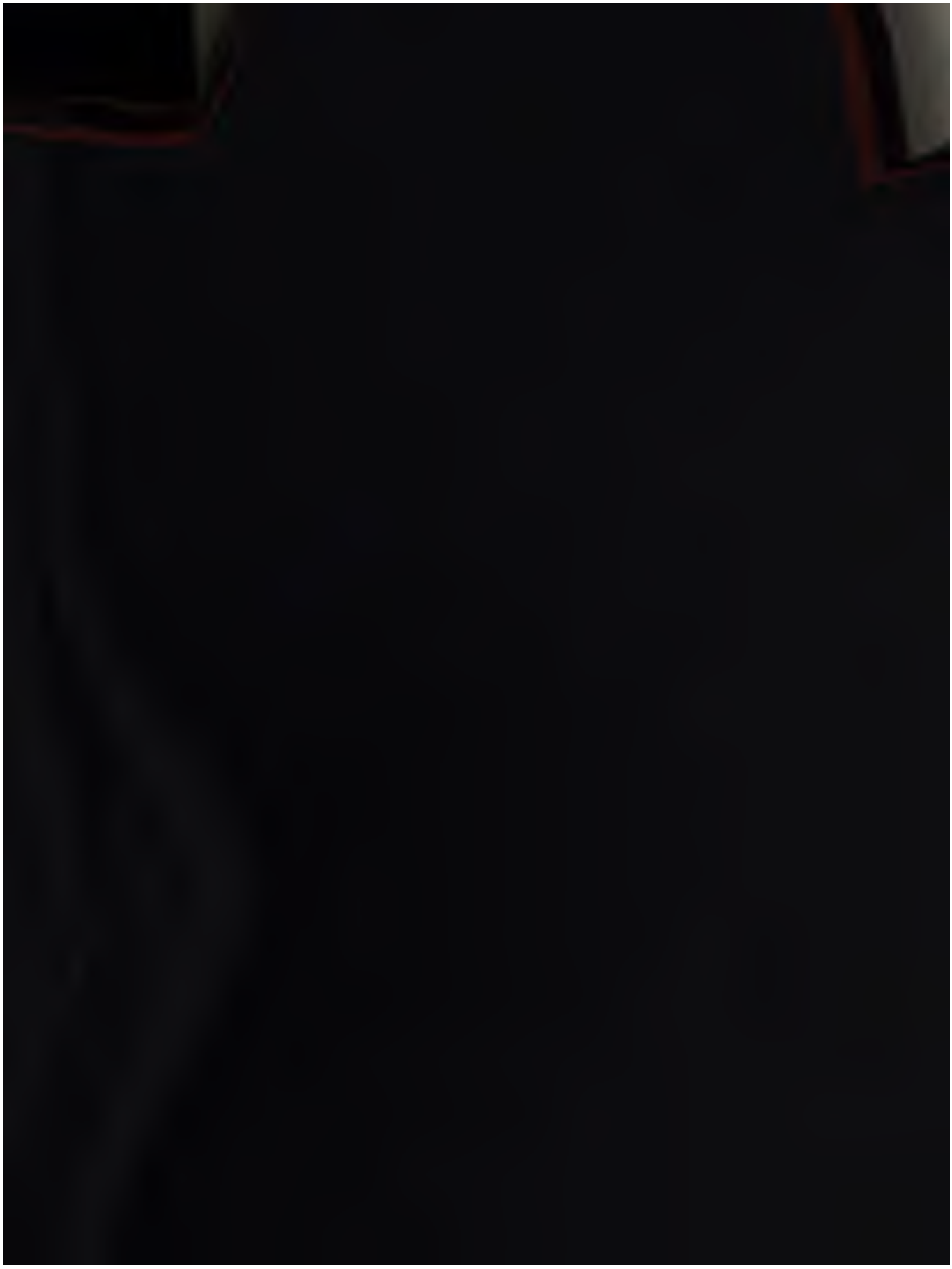
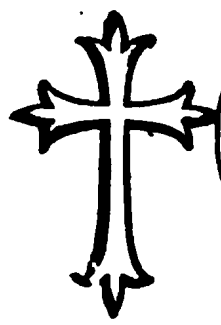


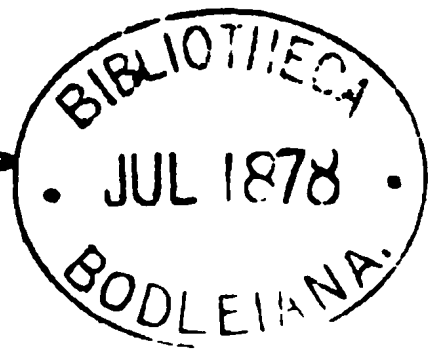
MUSINGS

ON

PSALM CXIX.

"THE PSALM OF DIVINE ASPIRATIONS."





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TO THE

REVERED MEMORY OF

ALEXANDER PENROSE FORBES,

BISHOP OF BRECHIN,

WHO ON OCT. 8, 1875,

AFTER A GRAND EPISCOPATE

OF 28 YEARS,

FELL ASLEEP IN HIM IN WHOM

HE TRUSTED.

PREFACE.

SOME, who saw this little book in manuscript, found it helpful to their souls; it is published in the hope that, through God's mercy, it may prove helpful to others.

R. S. H.

MARKBEECH VICARAGE,
EDEN BRIDGE,
The Epiphany, 1878.

MUSINGS ON PSALM CXIX.

1 Blessed are those that are undefiled in the way : and walk in the law of the Lord.

"Blessed," the very first word in this long Psalm, as it is also of the Sermon on the Mount: it shews the longing of Thy Soul, O God my Saviour: and so, according to this beginning, dost Thou "prevent us" in our infancy with the blessing of the New Birth.

"Blessed are those that are undefiled in the way," that is, in Thyself, who art "the Way," as well as "the Truth," and "the Life:" Blessed are those who, having been brought into Thee, keep themselves, by Thy grace, pure and stedfast in Thee.

Thus Thou tellest me who are blessed: Thou doest more, Thou tellest me how I, even I, may yet be among Thy blessed ones,

by "walking in the law of the Lord," that law which, being Thine, is "holy, and just, and good."

And by the word "walk" Thou tellest of progressing. The Christian life is ever advancing "from strength to strength," ever onwards, ever higher, ever nearer Thee, "shining more and more unto the perfect day."

2 Blessed are they that keep His testimonies: and seek Him with their whole heart.

God's "testimonies:" the word may mean, 1. His commandments; 2. The witness He has borne to Himself, the truths concerning His nature which He has made known: then; "keep" will mean, keep in mind and in heart, much the same as "hold fast the form of sound words."

"With their whole heart seek Him," as the One Object worth seeking for, the One Pearl of great price, the One Who alone can satisfy the soul. Nowhere, O Lord, dost Thou ask for a part of my heart: Thou desirest to have my whole self, that Thou

mayest give Thy whole Self to me. "Whom have I in heaven but Thee?"

Blessed indeed are they who so seek, for they shall find, yea, and be found.

Keeping His testimonies is seeking Him.

3 For they who do no wickedness : walk in His ways.

"No wickedness," for all Thy ways, O Lord my God, are perfect truth, and charity, and holiness.

"No wickedness," the meaning may be "no wilful wickedness," yet even so I, "if I say that I have no sin, deceive myself, and the truth is not in me."

The verse is,—

1. An acknowledgment of the perfection of God and His ways.

2. A pattern of what the life of God's children should be.

3. A leading us to Thee, O Lord Jesu, that we may be found in Thee, partakers of Thy righteousness, the righteousness which being Thine, has in it "no wickedness."

4 Thou hast charged : that we shall diligently keep Thy commandments.

Thou, Who hast a right to command us, by creation, by redemption, by the sancti-

fying grace of the Spirit, given before ever we could ask Thee, or know Thee. Thou hast charged that we shall diligently keep Thy commandments.

Diligently, for—

1. Thou art the Rewarder of them that diligently seek Thee.

2. There can be no real keeping of the commandments without diligence.

3. This will occupy us, and keep us from diligence after sin and the world.

Oh, help me to give "all diligence to make my calling and election sure," Thou Whose word to man is, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments."

5 O that my ways were made so direct: that I might keep Thy statutes.

I ask this of Thee, O Lord my God, for it is not in man to direct his ways, or to straighten them.

I ask it, because of the natural perverseness of my heart, ever luring me to turn from Thy way into the crooked ways of sin, and yet, I would keep Thy statutes.

I ask it, for often I know not how I should act, often too do I take the wrong turn, for

sin has dimmed the singleness of eye which Thou gavest in my regeneration.

I ask it, because Thou hast given me the desire to keep Thy statutes, but without Thee I am powerless to carry out the desire.

I ask it in that Name which has power with Thee.

6 So shall I not be confounded : while I have respect unto all Thy commandments.

"So," walking in ways which Thou hast made direct, declining in no measure either to the right hand or the left, hearing Thy Voice saying, "This is the way," and obeying that Voice.

"I shall not be confounded," not, 1, in my own conscience : nor, 2, before men, being bereft of Thy grace ; nor, 3, hereafter before the holy angels and the saints, for Thou hast promised, "My people shall never be ashamed."

"While I have respect ;" that is, so long as I shall have respect unto all Thy commandments ; unto *all* of them, not choosing one and being careless about another : while I watch as well as pray, yea, "watch unto prayer ;" while I take unto me "the whole

armour of God," and "give all diligence to make my calling and election sure."

7 I will thank Thee with an unfeigned heart: when I shall have learned the judgments of Thy righteousness.

Day by day will I thank Thee, for ways made direct, for Thy grace whereby I have walked in them, for not being confounded here,—an earnest, as I humbly trust, of not being confounded hereafter; and day by day more and more humbly, more and more heartily, as day by day I gain a better knowledge of Thy truth, Thy majesty, Thy mercy, yea, of Thine own self also: but most of all when I shall have learned, that is, fully learned, to know Thee and Thy judgments, and Thy righteousness.

But when will that be? only when I see no longer "through a glass darkly," for here in this world one must always be a learner. "Teach me, O Lord, the way of Thy statutes, and I shall keep them unto the end."

8 I will keep Thy ceremonies: O forsake me not utterly.

Here, by "ceremonies," may be understood the externals of God's worship: these, how-

ever trivial and unspiritual they may seem to be, I will keep; they appertain to Thy worship; by Thy authority in Thy Church they have been ordained: therefore will I keep them. "O forsake me not utterly."

"Not utterly," as most justly Thou mightest. Oh true and genuine humility; Thy gift to Thy servant, O God; Thy grace in him.

And if he so prayed, how much more should I: "forsake me not utterly," O Lord my God.

Our Lord, in allowing Himself to be circumcised, was keeping "ceremonies."

9 Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way: even by ruling himself after Thy word.

Man in his youth and inexperience, when the passions are strong, and the allurings of the world are keenly felt; how shall he keep himself pure and clean?

By following with willing soul the teaching of the written word, whereby he will be guided to abiding in the Incarnate Word, in Whom he will be "clean every whit."

"Yet ere the cares of life lie dim,
On thy young spirit's wings,
Now in thy morn remember Him,
From Whom each pure thought springs;
So in the onward vale of tears,
Where'er thy path may be,
When strength hath bowed to feeble years,
He will remember thee."

10 With my whole heart have I sought Thee: O let me not go wrong out of Thy commandments.

Truly the cry of a really humble soul, fearing in itself, yet resting hopefully on Thee. A prayer to be saved from sinning, even ignorantly.

"With my whole heart have I sought Thee;" that I have done so, is of Thy mercy, Thy free, great, gracious mercy: therefore have I hope that Thou wilt continue Thy loving-kindness, and hear my prayer, and keep me in the way of Thy truth and holiness.

"With my whole heart have I sought Thee"—so the Psalmist: and I?

"Oh, how slowly have I often
Followed where Thy Hand would draw:

How Thy kindness failed to soften,
How Thy chastening failed to awe:
Make me for Thy rest more ready,
As Thy path is longer trod;
Keep me in Thy friendship steady,
Till Thou call me home, my God."

11 Thy words have I hid within my heart: that I should not sin against Thee.

"Hid within my heart," for if not hidden, that is, if not embraced, as the earth embraces the seed sown in it, and guarded as a treasure, Satan will come, even as birds of the air come to seed lying on the surface of the earth, and snatch it away.

"Thy words," "in my heart," that they may be there, as a principle, as the motive of my works, that I sin not: that the root being holy, the branches, the produce of the root, the words and doings, may be holy also; so will Thy words be as the leaven leavening all until the whole be leavened[a].

So did Thy blessed Virgin Mother, O Lord Jesu: "Mary kept all these sayings, and pondered them in her heart."

[a] St. Matt. xiii. 33.

12 Blessed art Thou, O Lord : O teach me Thy statutes.

"Blessed art Thou, O Lord," yea, always blessed; everywhere blessed: in all that Thou doest or commandest, blessed, and only blessed. An act of devout adoration, in which all our thoughts of God, of His ways, and words, and works should end; and so be a preparing and training of our souls for the eternal "blessing, and honour, and glory, and power" of heaven.

Yet ours must not be mere adoration in feeling or words: it must be "not only with our lips, but also in our lives;" hence the added prayer, "O teach me Thy statutes," that I may keep them, Thou the only heart-teacher.

13 With my lips have I been telling : of all the judgments of Thy mouth.

So our Lord, "I have declared Thy Name, and will declare it."

"With my lips have I been telling," saith the Psalmist; and therefore openly, in the face of all men, and with a view to the good of all men.

"All the judgments of Thy mouth;" not "all Thy judgments," for they "are like the great deep," "unsearchable," and "past finding out;" but all the judgments of Thy mouth, all Thou hast been pleased to reveal to us.

"Thy words have I *hid*," of Thy judgments have I *spoken*: even as the Apostle hath said, "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

14 I have had as great delight in the way of Thy testimonies: as in all manner of riches.

How very little to say, and yet how much.

How little: "As great delight" in that which leadeth to eternal life, and to the Presence wherein is "the fulness of joy for evermore," as in that which in this world is so often a snare to the soul, and a source of such sore trouble, and which cannot go with us when we are called away.

How much: as great delight in self-subduing, and denying oneself, and taking up the cross, as in that which purchases so many pleasures and honours in this world, and is so highly esteemed among men.

But the verse may mean, "I have as much delight in Thy will, as men generally find in great riches." And great grace must Thou have given to Thy servant, that he should be able so to feel. In Thy mercy, give me the like.

15 I will talk of Thy commandments: and have respect unto Thy ways.

"They that feared the Lord, spake often one to another," and what Thy people did, Thy children should do, and much more abundantly. To my own soul also will I talk of Thy commandments; yea, with Thee, most holy One, within my soul will I converse, seeking to know Thy will, that I may know it aright, yea, and Thyself also, "and Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent."

"And to Thy ways will I have respect," not seeking my own way of doing Thy will, but considering only what Thou wouldest have me do, and in what way. Thou, all in all: I, nothing.

"For if we will forsake our own design
And hopes, which, as we grasp them, fade away;
Thou, Lord, wilt be to us, in this our day,
Sister and Friend and Brother."

16 My delight shall be in Thy statutes: and I will not forget Thy word.

"Statutes" and "word" may mean the same. Then the prophet, knowing that God is the only gracious, lovable One, says, "My delight shall be in Thy statutes;" and that it may prove so, even to the end, I will give earnest heed not to forget them. Or, "statutes" may, in the prophet's mind, refer to some seemingly hard or mysterious commands: then the meaning will be, "Hereafter my delight shall be in Thy statutes, in those very commands which now seem to me unreasonable, or hard, or incomprehensible. That this will be so Thy word assures me, and therefore, for my support and encouragement, I will keep that word in mind." Again: "Thy word," is the Lord Jesus. Even after I have done all that Thou hast commanded, and that with my whole soul, yet to Him alone, and through Him alone, will I look for acceptance.

17 O do well unto Thy servant: that I may live, and keep Thy word.

"Well;" that is, what is well in Thy sight, in order that in Thy sight I may live; live

with a strong, vigorous life, "that I may keep Thy word" in a free, large, generous spirit, that my life may in some way correspond with the bountiful way wherein Thou hast dealt with me.

"Do well;" that is, "do good," that which is really good; but Thou art Thyself the only good. Give me Thyself, then shall I live, for Thou art life; and then shall I keep Thy word, for Thou wilt be my strength.

"That I may keep Thy word," the one end for which life has been given, the one end for which Thou givest Thyself, that Thou "in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ."

18 Open Thou mine eyes: that I may see the wondrous things of Thy law.

"Open Thou mine eyes," they have been closed: seeing, they have not seen.

Open THOU them: they have been so closed, it needeth Divine grace to unclose them, and to cleanse them, that henceforth they may be "single," and to endue them with power to "see the wondrous things of Thy law."

Now "Christ is the end of the law;" the

wonders of the law must therefore be the stupendous truths, of His eternal generation, and His Incarnation, Passion, Death, Resurrection, Ascension, or His dealings with His Church, or with single souls; the wonders must in some way refer to the Lord Christ, to Him "who opened the eyes of the disciples, that they might understand the Scriptures, and the things concerning Himself."

19 I am a stranger upon earth: O hide not Thy commandments from me.

"A stranger;" most especially true of Thee Who didst come from, and yet didst never leave, heaven: Who, in the days wherein Thou walkedst upon earth, hadst not where to lay Thy head.

True also of me while I live upon earth, for where my Father is, there is my home, and my Father is in heaven. And O, my Father, into one of the "many mansions" of Thy house, even into the last and lowest, bring me one day, for Jesu's sake.

And that Thou mayest do so, O hide not Thy commandments from me. Hide them not, although I deserve nothing else;

hide them not, for in them, and in the right understanding of them, and in the patient, willing keeping of them, lies the way of life.

I am a stranger, but be not Thou to me, O Lord, "as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night," but abide with me in Thy mercy; through Thy grace I shall reach my home.

20 My soul breaketh out for the very fervent desire: that it hath alway unto Thy judgments.

"Breaketh out" from the trammels of mere worldliness, from the enticings and bondage of sin: it breaketh out to Thee, our Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier; to Thee Who alone can fill it, in Whom alone it can find rest. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness."

"Thy judgments;" whatever these may be in themselves, they are Thy judgments, therefore they are to Thy children objects of desire, yea, of "very fervent desire," and for love of them their soul is ever breaking forth. And mine should in like manner—yes, should—but is it?

In their full and complete sense, surely

these are Thy words, and only Thine, O Thou who saidst, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished."

21 Thou hast rebuked the proud: and cursed are they that do err from Thy commandments.

Yea, and how deservedly, for "why are earth and ashes proud," seeing it was their pride which brought death into the world, when they listened, pleased, to the "ye shall be as gods?"

And surely since Thou, O Lord, hast humbled Thyself to the Incarnation, pride must be "the great offence [b]."

And Thy rebuke, what is it but Thy mercy, that we may each be able to say, "Thy rebuke hath broken my heart," my proud, stony heart.

"They who do err," that is, wilfully, for what is wilful sin but dethroning Thee? While then we are living in wilful sin, we are under a curse, even Thy curse, and can look to hear only, "Depart from Me ye cursed." Yet when in sorrow we return to

[b] Psalm xix. 13.

Thee, Thou wilt return to us, and of us will Thy word be, "Blessed are they that mourn."

22 O turn from me shame and rebuke: for I have kept Thy testimonies.

The shame, which I deserve; the being made "a public example."

The rebuke, the hard blame which also indeed I deserve.

Or "shame," and "rebuke" may both mean "ridicule." O turn from me, for I am weak, and my faith may fail to endure under it, the mockery and laughter from the ungodly, which the being true to Thee so often brings with it, O Thou Who Thyself wast "mocked" and "set at nought."

"For I have kept Thy testimonies," so the Psalmist. And I? My God Thou knowest how imperfect my obedience has been, how very far it has been from what it should have been; yet I may not deny that Thy grace has been with me, has enabled me in some measure to be true to Thee. To Thee therefore, to Thy mercy in Him Who "hid not His face from shame and spitting," be all the glory.

23 Princes also did sit and speak against me: but Thy servant is occupied in Thy statutes.

"Princes:" "Of a truth against Thy holy Child Jesus both Herod and Pontius Pilate were gathered together;" and as it was with the Master, so will it ever be with the servant.

But "Thy servant is occupied in Thy statutes." So with the Master, "Who when He was reviled, reviled not again, when He suffered He threatened not, but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously." So may it be through Thy grace with the servant.

"Occupied," implies the being wholly taken up—the having no eye or ear or thought for anything else—yes, that indeed is being Thy servant; that only can rightly be called serving Thee, our Creator, our Preserver, our Hope, and our All.

24 For Thy testimonies are my delight: and my counsellors.

Therefore was the Psalmist occupied in them: and it was because he had with pure and single heart taken Thy testimonies for

his counsellors, that they had become his delight.

"All earthly joy must fail at last,
All earthly love grow cold,
Save love by that one Love made fast
To Jesus and His fold.
One aim there is of endless worth,
One sole sufficient love,
To do Thy will, my God, on earth,
And reign with Thee above.
From joys that failed my soul to fill,
From hopes that all beguiled,
To changeless rest in Thy blest will,
Lord Jesu, call Thy child."

Lord Jesu, Thou Whose meat it was to do the will of Him that sent Thee, and to finish His work.

25 My soul cleaveth to the dust: O quicken Thou me, according to Thy word.

"My soul cleaveth to the dust;" this may mean, "my life is closing, the time is at hand when I shall lie down in the dust." In this case, "O quicken me according to Thy word," will mean, "O spare me a little that I may recover my strength, before I go hence and be no more seen."

Or, the words may mean: "my soul still cleaveth to those things which are of the earth and earthy," O recall it, that it may savour the things of God, wherein only is life.

Or they may describe the Psalmist's humility: My soul is humbled before Thee, it is as it were dead before Thee through my many sins, and manifold. Raise it up I pray Thee unto life, as Thou hast promised.

In each sense it is the soul throwing itself on Thee, O God. "In Thee, O Lord, have I put my trust." In Thee, Who Thyself wast brought down into the dust of death for us sinners.

26 I have acknowledged my ways, and Thou heardest me: O teach me Thy statutes.

"My ways," those ways which I have perversely chosen for myself, when Thy hand pointed out others: "my ways," my many ways, clean they may have been in mine own eyes, yet not Thy one way—"the way of holiness."

"And Thou heardest me," when out of the

deep I cried unto Thee; for "if we confess our sins, Thou art faithful and just to forgive us our sins." But that I walk no more in any "way that is not good," in any way but Thine alone,

"O teach me Thy statutes"—teach my heart to know them, my soul to love them, that my whole life may be a stedfast abiding in them.

27 Make me to understand the way of Thy commandments: and so shall I talk of Thy wondrous works.

Only from Thee can we have understanding, therefore only when taught by Thee can we speak, with hope of good, of Thee, and Thy ways and works.

"Make me," that is (for Thou never forcest), "give me grace, help me, guide me:" and so, with the spirit, and with the understanding also, with befitting reverence and humility, with prevailing power, and to Thy glory, shall I speak of Thy wondrous works: the wondrous power, the no less wondrous love, Thou hast shewn in our Creation, Redemption, and Sanctification.

"Thou shalt open my lips, O Lord, and
y mouth shall shew Thy praise."

28 My soul melteth away for very heaviness: comfort Thou me according unto Thy word.

How true of Him, when His "soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death,"—but He prayed, and "was heard in that He feared;" and comforted, when strengthened by the angel. Strange and awful mystery, the Almighty strengthened by a creature. So with the Master.

So also with the servant. His soul also was in heaviness, "not able to look up," yet he knew that he had "a place to flee unto," even Thyself,—"Thou that hearest the prayer,"—and to Thee he betook himself, and in Thy Hand he left himself, and in doing so he found his comfort.

So too would I, my God, in my heaviness betake myself to Thee.

29 Take from me the way of lying: and cause Thou me to make much of Thy law.

"The way of lying," his way who "is a liar and the father of it."

Take from me untrue thoughts of Thee, of Thy nature, Thy wisdom, Thy justice, Thy holiness, Thy love.

Take from me untrue thoughts of Thy Word, Thy Church, Thy Sacraments. Take from me untrue thoughts of myself, of my condition in Thy sight.

Make me thoroughly true, sincere, upright. And that I may be, "cause Thou me to make much of Thy law."

To make much of it, to exercise myself in it day and night, to love it, its truth, and its holiness.

30 I have chosen the way of truth: and Thy judgments have I laid before me.

"The way of truth:" Thy way, Who art Thyself "the Truth," and "the only true God."

I have had a choice: "life and good, and death and evil," have been set before me, and I have chosen life, that I may live: I have chosen Him, and His way, Who is Life as well as Truth. "O hold Thou up my goings in Thy paths, that my footsteps slip not."

"And" to this choice of "the good part" I have been guided, and in it I have been confirmed, because:

"Thy judgments have I laid before me," "The judgments of Thy righteousness," for Thou "rewardest every man according to his works;" yet not according to my works,

O Lord, but according to Thy mercy deal Thou with me.

31 I have stuck unto Thy testimonies: O Lord, confound me not.

"Thy testimonies:" 1. The testimonies Thou, (not man), hast borne to Thyself: and so in Thee, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, have I believed.

2. Thy testimonies to the Holy Catholic Church, and so in Thy Church and household have I lived:

3. Thy testimonies to Thy blessed will and purpose for me, and so have I striven to love and serve Thee.

And as by Thy grace I have stuck unto these Thy testimonies, not indeed without many falls, and many failures, so will I, only

"O Lord, confound me not;" not now before my enemy and Thine, by withdrawing from me Thy help; neither let me be confounded in that day, when shame and confusion shall overwhelm them who are not found in Thee.

32 I will run the way of Thy commandments: when Thou hast set my heart at liberty.

His heart was set at liberty from covetous-

ness, to whom Jesus said, "Make haste and come down, for to-day I must abide at Thy house."

His, from self-confidence, to whom: "The cock shall not crow before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest Me."

His, from self-righteousness, whom Thou didst strike down helpless and blinded to the ground, and who thence cried: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"

And the hearts of all that great host who have been, or are now crucified, with Thee.

All, with hearts enlarged, and eager souls, and willing feet have run, "not as uncertainly," in all things seeking not their own but Thy will.

"O God, to us may grace be given
To follow in their train."

33 Teach me, O Lord, the way of Thy statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end.

Teach me, for great is my ignorance. Teach Thou me, for Thou alone canst, teach the heart unto salvation.

"The way of Thy statutes." 1. Thy will and commandments. 2. Their true sense and real meaning — "the deep things of

God." 3. The large, willing way in which they should be kept.

Of all this, Thou alone, O God the Holy Spirit, canst be the Teacher, for "the things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit of God."

"I shall keep it unto the end." Only when we so engage ourselves, can we hope to be taught: if this be not in our hearts, "God is mocked."

"Unto the end;" for "he that endureth unto the end shall be saved." And to this I am already pledged, "to walk in the same all the days of my life." O help Thou me!

34 Give me understanding, and I shall keep Thy law: yea, I shall keep it with my whole heart.

"Understanding," to see and feel how great the difference between Thy will and my natural will: Thy ways, and the ways of men: Thy "gift," and "the wages of sin[e]." Give me the "wise and understanding heart," which alone can see the things which make for my peace.

"And I shall keep Thy law," for with the

[e] Rom. vi. 23.

soul enlightened by the "true Light," I shall know that Thy law is the only good.

"With my whole heart," for no other keeping is keeping.

35 Make me to go in the path of Thy commandments: for therein is my desire.

"To will is present with me," and I thank Thee, O my God, for that I have the will is of Thy grace and mercy: but Thou hast said, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments;" therefore do I need a "second grace, not to receive in vain the first grace, not to come short of it;" therefore unto Thee do I come, to Thee "Who makest us both to will and to do," to Thee do I make this my prayer.

"Shew me the way that leadeth unto Thee:
  Though it be difficult, Thou art all might:
Though low, Thou art of love a boundless sea:
  Though dark, Thou art Thyself the living Light:
Though toilsome, Thou art goodness infinite:
  And wilt refresh the heavy-laden soul
That comes to Thee: guide me to Thee aright,
  I cannot come, unless Thou dost control:
  Lord, Thou enlighten, draw, and fill my being whole."

36 Incline my heart unto Thy testimonies : and not to covetousness.

"Thy testimonies"—the truth Thou hast revealed: the witness Thou hast borne to Thyself, O Thou "faithful and true Witness," in Thy Word, and in Thy Church.

But other testimonies Thou hast; the conversation of Thy saints; the meek answer under provocation; the patient self-denial and taking up of the cross; to these, and to such-like Thy testimonies, and not to that to which my fallen nature is prone,—"covetousness, which is idolatry;" nor to the world, "which lieth in wickedness;" nor to the ways of the world, incline Thou my heart.

Incline it to see in such things a testimony to "the word of Thy grace, which is able to build us up:" a testimony to Thy Presence within Thy children: a testimony to the blessedness of being Thine.

37 O turn away mine eyes, lest they behold vanity : and quicken Thou me in Thy way.

"Vanity," that is, emptiness, those things which pass away, "which perish in the using," which cannot satisfy, which, if fol-

lowed, make us "vain[d]" ourselves before Thee. What is the prayer then but this: Turn Thou mine eyes that they may look unto Thee, O Lord God, that I may seek to please Thee, not myself, for Thou alone endurest; Thou alone canst satisfy the soul which Thou hast made for Thyself, even my soul.

And as it is when they are by Thy grace walking in Thy way, when they love Thee, and keep Thy commandments, that Thou dost come in Thy full graciousness unto men, and abidest with them, therefore "quicken Thou me in Thy way," that I may know Thee more truly, and have Thee more securely, and with Thee, Life, and Light, and Strength, and Hope.

38 O stablish Thy word in Thy servant: hat I may fear Thee.

Stablish it, strengthen it, settle it in Thy servant, in his heart, in his soul, even as Thou, O Lord Jesu, didst to Thy Virgin Mother, who "kept all Thy sayings, and pondered them in her heart."

Stablish Thyself also in Thy servant, for

[d] 2 Kings xvii. 15.

Thou art "the Word," and Thy kingdom is "within."

That I may fear Thee—fear to offend Thee, fear to lose Thee: that I may "fear one thing only, the fearing anything more than Thee."

39 Take away the rebuke that I am afraid of: for Thy judgments are good.

Words prophetic of, "Let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless, not what I will, but what Thou wilt."

"The rebuke that I am afraid of;" that is, Thy rebuke: a rebuke from that Heart which has so loved me: from that Mouth which cannot be gainsaid. Yet not altogether Thy rebuke now, for "when Thou with rebukes dost chasten man for sin [e]," it is that he may live: but the rebuke "in Thine anger:" and the rebuke hereafter, when Thou shalt say, "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire."

Thy judgments are good, even man condemned must own Thy justice: "we indeed justly." But, O my Lord, let mercy rejoice against judgment, Thy mercy against Thy

[e] Ps. xxxviii. 1.

judgment on my sins. Take away the rebuke that I am afraid of.

40 Behold, my delight is in Thy commandments: O quicken me in Thy righteousness.

"In Thy righteousness:" that is, as the Psalmist understood it, in Thy truthfulness, in Thy faithfulness to Thy word: he could not have known, as we know, Him "Who of God is made unto us righteousness," in Whom, and for Whose sake, we pray to be quickened.

But to him who had advanced so far in the spiritual life, as to find his delight in Thy commandments, what was this quickening? More earnestness still: a more entire yielding up of himself: or, perhaps, the grace of perseverance, that he might prove "stedfast unto the end." "If ye continue in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed." This is Thy word, O Lord Jesus. Vouchsafe to keep Thy servant stedfast.

41 Let Thy loving mercy come also unto me, O Lord: even Thy salvation, according unto Thy word.

"Thy loving mercy," for to that indeed my soul looketh, as well as to Thy right-

eousness: Thy special mercy also, "even Thy salvation according to Thy word," according to Thy repeated promises.

When Simeon took up "the Child Jesus" in his arms, he said, "mine eyes have seen Thy salvation." Longing then for "Thy salvation," the Psalmist was really longing for the day of Christ. Thou indeed art the Father's "loving mercy," a mercy worthy even of the Everlasting, the Almighty, the All-holy God. Thou indeed art His "salvation," the salvation designed by Him, given by Him, wrought out in accordance with His word, Thou O Lord Jesu, Thou alone.

42 So shall I make answer unto my blasphemers: for my trust is in Thy word.

"So," that is, having "Thy salvation."

"My blasphemers," those that speak evil against my soul.

"For my trust" that Thy loving mercy is with me, even Thy salvation, "is in Thy word," rests on the assurance which that word gives. "Thou shalt answer for me, O Lord my God."

The Psalmist is looking forward to putting to silence, not only "the ignorance of foolish

men," but the malice of those who day and night accuse God's children before His throne. This indeed he would do, but only by that "so," by "Thy loving mercy," even "Thy salvation;" by Thee, not by anything he can himself do, for it is in Thee, and in Thy word he trusts, and fears not. Grant me the like grace, O loving Lord.

We may perhaps look on this, and the preceding verse, as the words of the Lord Jesus, looking forward, when "despised and rejected of men," to His resurrection, as the full reply to all their sinful mockeries.

43 O take not the word of Thy truth utterly out of my mouth: for my hope is in Thy judgments.

The cry of one who feels keenly with what entire justice God may deprive him of the word of truth—so lightly has he esteemed it, so careless has he been in obeying it—and give him over "to believe a lie." It is a cry which proves the truth of repentance.

"The word of truth," not words; for there is "one faith," one "form of sound words."

"For my hope is in Thy judgments."

Perhaps the judgments which Thou hadst laid on himself, which he knew were Thy chastenings, to the end that he should not be condemned with the wicked, which therefore were a source of hope.

Or, "judgments" may mean in general, Thy dealings with repentant sinners, Thy tender mercies, Thy long long-sufferings, O Father of mercies.

44 So shall I alway keep Thy law: yea, for ever and ever.

"So"—that is, if Thou leavest Thy truth with me, thereby assuring me that Thy grace will be with me, yea, Thou Thyself also—"shall I alway keep Thy law, yea, for ever and ever."

But what law shall there be throughout eternity, when Thy saints, being made like Thee, for they shall see Thee as Thou art, shall need no law? The law of love, for "Charity never faileth," and "God is love[f]."

Shed abroad Thy love in my heart, so that I may love Thee, and in Thee love my friends, and for Thee love mine enemies, O Lord Thou God of love, Thou lover of souls.

[f] S. John iii. 8.

45 And I will walk at liberty : for I seek Thy commandments.

"And ;" that is, meanwhile, until the light of eternity shines upon me.

"I will walk at liberty" from the bondage of, though not from the temptation to, sin, "for I seek Thy commandments." They constitute "the law of liberty."

"I will walk at liberty" in this life, for Thou wilt not take Thy truth from me, neither the word of truth, nor, Thyself Who art "the Truth ;" so shall I be "free indeed." And that Thou wilt abide with me I am well assured, for through the grace already given by Thee, and given for this very end, "I seek Thy commandments ;" and seeking Thy commandments is seeking Thee, and never canst Thou say to any, "Seek ye Me in vain."

Yet is this but partial liberty, full freedom is yet to come. Not now therefore, but hereafter, I shall walk at liberty, even in "the glorious liberty of the children of God," for now I seek Thy commandments. To that liberty will I look, for that will I hope, but only in Thee, O Lord Jesu.

46 I will speak of Thy testimonies also, even before kings: and will not be ashamed.

O Lord Jesu Christ, Who Thyself "witnessed a good confession before Pontius Pilate;" Who didst give such grace to Thy holy Apostle that he feared not to speak before Felix "of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come;" and Who didst so speak by him that "Felix trembled;" speak Thou to my soul, that I may know Thy testimonies myself, may love them, and seek to keep them; then, open Thou my lips O Lord, and speak by me, "and sinners shall be converted unto Thee," and Thy children confirmed in Thy truth, and in the blessedness of walking in Thy ways, Who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Spirit, One God, blessed for ever. Amen.

47 And my delight shall be in Thy commandments: which I have loved.

Not only would the Psalmist keep the commandments, he would speak of them; not only would he speak of them, but he found his delight in them; and so in Thy Name, O Lord, and on Thy behalf, he

teaches us that there should be the outward obedience, the outward expression, but there should be also the inward love; "the kingdom of God is within."

How truly had he overcome the natural inclinations of the heart to love the world and the things which are of the world, when his "delight was in Thy commandments."

How gladly would he say, "By the grace of God I am what I am," I have what I have, I do what I do, I feel what I feel.

48 My hands also will I lift up unto Thy commandments, which I have loved: and my study shall be in Thy statutes.

To lift up the hands, is to pray: it is also to vow; it is also the natural expression of a craving in the heart.

The Psalmist therefore prays for grace to keep the commandments, he engages himself to do so, and he craves for a better, and deeper, and truer knowledge of them.

But all this he had done before, and often before. Yes, and often again he will do so, because often he would renew his strength, and renew his vow, and refresh his love, by lifting up his soul to Thee.

"And my study shall be in Thy statutes." They henceforth are to form his pursuit. How true a picture of the Christian life, —Praying, Striving, Longing.

49 O think upon Thy servant, as concerning Thy word : wherein Thou hast caused me to put my trust.

"Thy word" concerning Thyself, that Thou "willest not that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance," and many such words, Thou givest.

Thy word concerning him that cometh to Thee, that Thou wilt "in no wise cast him out," and many such words, Thou givest.

So think upon me, so look upon me, so deal with me, for in those Thy words have I put my trust.

But of course, "in Thy word," means also in the only Begotten, whose name is "the Word of God." In Thee, O Lord, have I put my trust. In Thee, O Lord, will I trust for ever.

50 The same is my comfort in my trouble : for Thy word hath quickened me.

Of what trouble does the Psalmist speak? Of some one pressing trouble? or of the

ordinary troubles of life? for "man is born unto trouble," and "in this tabernacle we groan being burdened." We know not; but this we do know, that for relief and comfort he betook himself, not to any created being or thing, but unto Thee, O Lord, unto Thy word, unto Thee the Comforter, and unto his trust in Thee.

For before this he had learned, yea and proved, the quickening power of that word, and of such trust in it; and we trusting in like manner in its teaching, in its light, guiding to the Cross of Jesus, in what it tells us of His Graciousness, of His abundant Merits, of how "if we suffer we shall also reign with Him," we also may find a very quickening power, and quickened, shall find comfort.

"O Thou, from Whom all goodness flows,
I lift my soul to Thee,
In all my sorrows, conflicts, woes,
Good Lord, remember me."

51 The proud have had me exceedingly in derision: yet have I not shrinked from Thy law.

This derision may have been the "trouble" of verse 50, and very hard it is to bear. Yet

the proud had Thee exceedingly in derision, O Lord Jesu, even in Thy extremest agony, "coming to Thee, and mocking Thee," and "wagging their heads," and reviling Thee: proud spirits of evil, moving proud men. And Thy example under it all, Thy patience, Thy meekness, Thy trust, (for even Thine enemies allowed this, saying, "He trusted in God,") made known to us in Thy word, will be our comfort, and keep us from shrinking back; yea, and Thy very words, for Thou hast said, "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for My sake."

52 For I remembered Thine everlasting judgments, O Lord: and received comfort.

That he might not be turned from Thee by the ridicule of the proud, he remembered Thine everlasting judgments, O Lord; and not only was the inclination to shrink back removed from him, but he also received comfort.

He remembered that it is a "righteous thing" with Thee to recompense to those who are troubled for Thy sake[g] "rest with Thy-

[g] 2 Thess. i. 6, 7.

self,"—not indeed yet, for now Thou wouldst try us, our faith, and patience, and love,—but when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed: he remembered also Thy Promise, that "the patient abiding of the meek shall not perish for ever."

And this, for his support and comfort Thy servant, O Lord, was able to remember, because his "study had been in Thy statutes," and he had hidden them "within his heart."

But with the remembrance of Thy promised mercy to the faithful, there came the remembrance of the recompense to those who trouble; and saddened, he adds in the spirit of Him Who wept over Jerusalem,—

53 I am horribly afraid: for the ungodly that forsake Thy law.

To whom Thou, the "meek and lowly in heart," Thou, the Source of all peace and joy, Thou, the gentle Lamb of God, wilt be constrained to say, if they repent not, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

O Thou Who camest to call sinners to repentance, "that it may please Thee to give

us true repentance, to forgive us all our sins, negligences, and ignorances, and to endue us with the grace of Thy Holy Spirit to amend our lives, according to Thy Holy Word," ere it be too late; O Lord Jesu, ere it be too late!

54 Thy statutes have been my songs: in the house of my pilgrimage.

Here, O my God, Thou knowest my soul is a stranger and a sojourner, dwelling in an earthly tabernacle; that tabernacle soon to be dissolved, yet, soon again to be raised up; waiting now for a sure resting-place, though how unworthy, to be received from Thy mercy for Jesu's sake; but while waiting, Thy statutes are my songs, my praise, my glory.

Keeping them is the outward expression of my inward hope, that Thou wilt have mercy upon me a sinner.

55 I have thought upon Thy Name, O Lord, in the night-season: and have kept Thy law.

Thy Name, O my Father; Thy Name, O my Redeemer; Thy Name, O my Sanc-

tifier. Thy Name, for Thou art One, and Thy Name denotes Thyself.

I have thought of Thee in the night-season. 1. In the hours of actual darkness, "on my bed[h];" 2. in times of worldly adversity; 3. in times of depression, when my heart has failed, and my soul been cast down; 4. in times of temptation, when the powers of darkness have gathered round about me.

In all these, O Lord, have I remembered Thee, Thy Presence with Thy servants, Thy promise, that as my day, so shall my strength be: Thy assurance that "all things work together for good to those who love Thee:" and fearing to lose the blessed comfort which Thy Presence gives, I have sought to please Thee, keeping Thy commandments.

56 This I had: because I kept Thy commandments.

"This," that is, grace to remember Thee, Thy will, Thy promises, in times of trouble and temptation; grace "at midnight to rise and give thanks unto Thee."

"Because I kept Thy commandments."

And surely most truly prophetic, and most true is this word of Him, Who, having come

[h] Ps. lxiii. 6.

into the world not to do His own will as separate from His Father's, but the will of Him that sent Him, "rose up a long while before day," and prayed, and "continued all night in prayer," and Who

"In the darkest hour
That ever dawned on sinful earth,"

although forsaken for a while, yet felt His present God again.

And all this He had, because He pleased not Himself[1], but Thee.

57 Thou art my portion, O Lord: I have promised to keep Thy law.

"Thou art my portion, O Lord."

What a word is this, from man to God, from me to Thee.

"I have promised to keep Thy law."

Yet this addeth nothing unto Thee, O Thou the only-Perfect. Nothing to Thee, but it is everything to me, for so, keeping Thy law, shall I, in Thy Christ, have hope for hereafter. "Thou art my portion," yea, even now, for Thou hast said, "he that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him:" and again, "We will

[1] Rom. xv. 3.

come unto him, and make Our abode with him," therefore in Thee will I hope, in Thee, in Thee only.

"I have promised to keep Thy law." Not only in my baptism did I make this promise, but I repeat it every time I approach Thine altar. But how can I keep it, unless Thou help me? therefore will I do, as the Psalmist goes on to tell me, that he did,

58 I made my humble petition in Thy presence with my whole heart: O be merciful unto me, according to Thy word.

"My humble petition," so he—and I, and *my* prayers?

"With my whole heart," so he—and I, and *my* heart?

And "in Thy presence:" but where is not Thy Presence, of Whom it is written, that Thou fillest heaven and earth? everywhere, then, we may pray, lifting up holy hands—yet, as there is a special presence of Thy Majesty in heaven, Thy dwelling-place: so is there on earth, in Thy Church, and upon Thine Altar; and there especially will I make my prayers.

And the "humble petition," what was it?

Our only word, *mercy*, Thy mercy, and that, according to Thy promise, "Ask, and ye shall have;" and again, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him: and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon;" "if thou turn unto the Lord with all thy heart, and with all thy soul," for His mercy, while it is over all His works, rests upon them that fear Him.

59 I called mine own ways to remembrance: and turned my feet unto Thy testimonies.

For Thou hast said, "Whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall have mercy:" but how can any one know them, that he may confess, save by self-examination? therefore "let a man examine himself."

"Mine own ways," ways altogether mine, and therefore evil: "for My ways are not your ways, saith the Lord."

"And turned my feet unto Thy testimonies;" for when I was walking after mine own will, my feet were turned away from Thy truth and purity.

The younger son called his own ways to remembrance, when he had come to himself, and said, "How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!" He turned his feet unto Thy testimonies when he arose and came to his father, and said, "make me as one of thy hired servants."

60 I made haste, and prolonged not the time: to keep Thy commandments.

For in truth, the time past of my life may suffice to have wrought mine own will, to have walked in mine own ways.

O Lord my God, sad it is, and very sad, now to look back on time wasted, and opportunities lost or misused; overwhelming and crushing down to earth would the remembrance be, were it not that Thou, the Truth, hast told us of those whom, even at the eleventh hour, Thou didst send into Thy vineyard; and they arose and went, and Thou didst reward them. And I will arise and go to my Father, and Thou my Father wilt help me, and I will hold back no more, nor will I any more be slothful.

61 The congregations of the ungodly have robbed me: but I have not forgotten Thy law.

"The congregations of the ungodly:"

What are these but the devil and his angels?

And of what have they robbed me? of the blessed innocence of my regeneration, even as they despoiled Eve of her innocence in the garden; and not only have they robbed me, but they have wounded me, left me half-dead, and even so have they not departed from me, but still compass me about with their wiles and their lies.

"But I have not forgotten Thy law," O my God; nor yet Thy word, "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

"Just as I am, without one plea,
Save that Thy Blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidst me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come."

Thee also, O Lord Jesu, have they robbed, for by their wiles they have taken from Thee some whom Thou hadst purchased with Thy Blood.

62 At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto Thee : because of Thy righteous judgments.

So at midnight in the prison, Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises.

And the prayer of a Saint was,

"Speak peace unto our souls, and tell
Of heavenly joys with Thee that dwell,
So shall our spirits, all night long,
Sing to our God their thankful song."

And truly in the silent watches of the night, there does creep over the awakened soul a sense of awe, of separation from the world, of being alone with God, a realization of the coming judgment: therefore has this season been to Thy saints a time of very special prayer and praise.

And if they found it very helpful at such hours to seek Thy face, O Lord, and a great strengthening of their souls against the unclean powers of darkness, so too through Thy mercy may I : Awaken me at the fitting time, and grant me to seek Thee for Thy glory and Thy service.

63 I am a companion of all them that fear Thee: and keep Thy commandments.

The Psalmist speaks of himself as one of a body, whose members were united in the holy bond of fearing God and keeping His commandments.

Yet this brotherhood was, as it were, no brotherhood, compared with our Christian brotherhood in the Holy Catholic Church.

The Psalmist and his companions were made one by an external bond, we not only by a like bond, "one hope of our calling, and one faith," but also by the internal, of "one Spirit" dwelling in all, whereby we are "members one of another." So in the Catholic Church must we look for the fulfilment of Thy desire and longing, O Lord Jesu, "that all may be one."

Oh that we might realize more and more this precious truth, and seek to bè less unworthy of it.

"Oh might we all our lineage prove,
Give and forgive, do good and love,
By soft endearments, in kind strife,
Lightening the load of daily life."

64 The earth, O Lord, is full of Thy mercy: O teach me Thy statutes.

"The earth;" therefore may we always hope that even "the creature itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption," in some way to share "the glorious liberty of the children of God."

And if the earth be precious in Thy sight, O Thou Creator and "Lord of the whole earth," how much more they whom Thou hast made, of dust indeed, but in Thine own Image, and after Thy likeness; and how ready wilt Thou be to hear their prayers, if only they be such as this.

"O teach me Thy statutes."

Teach my heart to know them, teach my will to choose them.

Again; "the earth" may possibly mean in some special sense, man's body. Then the verse assures us that the body is as much the object of God's care and love as the soul; for both soul and body Christ died; both will be glorified; with both we should worship.

65 O Lord, Thou hast dealt graciously

with Thy servant : according unto Thy word.

Graciously, indeed, in my creation, created as I was for this end, that I might be a "partaker of Thy Divine nature;" graciously, in my preservation, notwithstanding my provocations of Thee; graciously, in all the blessings of this life, although in my folly I have so often misused or abused them; but graciously above all, in "Thine inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ," in the "means of grace" which Thou hast given, especially in the holy feast, and in the "hopes of glory."

Graciously also in this, that I find pleasure in Thy will, not indeed all that may be found,—as yet am I very far from that, as Thou knowest,—but some, and the hope of more from Thy pity; a very gracious gift, indeed, to me unworthy.

66 O learn me true understanding and knowledge : for I have believed Thy commandments.

I believe that Thou, the Eternal Father, didst speak on Sinai; that Thou, the co-

eternal Son, didst speak in Thine own very Person visible on earth; that Thou, the co-eternal Spirit, didst speak by the Apostles; Thine, therefore, are "the commandments," O everlasting Trinity; this I believe; therefore to Thee do I pray for a "true understanding" of them, for a true understanding of Thy truth; and for knowledge; not that which "puffeth up," but the true knowledge; for it is "life eternal to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent."

67 Before I was troubled, I went wrong: but now have I kept Thy word.

"The trials that beset you,
The sorrows ye endure,
The manifold temptations
Which death alone can cure,—
What are they but His jewels
Of right celestial worth?
What are they but the ladder
Set up to heaven on earth?"

"No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous. Nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness unto them which are ex-

ercised thereby;" "wherefore, lift up the hands which hang down;" lift them up in prayer, and hope, and trust.

68 Thou art good and gracious: O teach me Thy statutes.

"Good," for "there is none good but One," and Thou art that One.

"Gracious," full of grace, even cleansing us when penitent, helpless as we are of ourselves, and defiled, in Thine own Blood, and making us partakers of Thine own goodness.

"Good" and "gracious." Truly such have all found Thee, who have ever with lowly heart sought Thee, therefore do I hope that Thou wilt have mercy upon me, and hearken unto this my prayer, "O teach me Thy statutes."

But is there not "vain repetition" in this prayer, often as we find it in this Psalm? Repetition indeed there is, but no vain repetitions, for it expresses the very longing of the soul of the penitent to be taught more and more by God, and more and more of His holy will; nay, it cannot be vain, for is it not God Himself Who leads us

thus to repeat the prayer? It cannot, then, be "vain," neither, blessed be Thy mercy, O my God, can it be in vain, if it spring from the humble heart.

69 The proud have imagined a lie against me: but I will keep Thy commandments with my whole heart.

It was so with the Lord Jesus. The proud of this world, moved by the proud one, Satan, lied against Him. Yet, having come to do the Father's will, He did it to the end, "with His whole heart."

So it was with His great servant, Joseph, as we read in Genesis xxxix.

So it was with the martyrs: accused of being atheists, of living without God, because they believed in the one God, because they were, in truth, keeping the commandments with their whole heart, blessing them who cursed them, doing good to them that despitefully used them.

And in Thy Providence, O my God, against me also lies may be imagined. O that they may be lies without any foundation of truth; O that under all I may have grace to abide with Thee, and with Thy

servant of old time "give myself unto prayer," and not be "moved away from the hope of the Gospel."

70 Their heart is as fat as brawn: but my delight hath been in Thy law.

They, "the proud," "have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; they have nourished their heart as in a day of slaughter;" hence, their heart waxed gross, and they became dull of hearing and seeing, and they knew not how God resisteth such; not only leaves them, but "scatters them, in the imagination of their heart." Yet if Thy children pray, O Lord, peradventure even to these Thou wilt grant "repentance, that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil."

And I, if I cannot say "my delight hath been in Thy law," as in truth I cannot, yet I may hope that I am, even though with slow steps, tending towards it; but this is Thy mercy towards me, and Thy grace; glory be to Thee, O Lord God.

In this verse God contrasts self-indulgence with that delight in Him, which will come from self-denial.

71 It is good for me that I have been in trouble; that I may learn Thy statutes.

Here, then, is the reason why God afflicts His children; that they may learn,

1. His will.

2. That apart from that will, they never can find peace or joy.

3. That they "be not high-minded, but fear."

If we would but look through the troubles which come from God's hand, and see the side where the light shines, see the gain which is stored up in them, they would become to us, even to our own eyes, "light afflictions," and "but for a moment," if indeed afflictions at all.

"We glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed."

He who was caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words, was given "a thorn in the flesh to buffet him," that he might not "be exalted above measure."

O Lord, correct me, but with judgment; not in Thine anger, lest Thou bring me to nothing.

72 The law of Thy mouth is dearer unto me : than thousands of gold and silver.

His law, Who spake as never man spake; His, also, Whose voice was heard on Sinai, though no similitude was seen; His, also, Who spake by the prophets, for "these Three are One." Dearer to the true-hearted servant of God is this law, than thousands of gold and silver; yea, than thousands are to the covetous or miserly.

Yet this law required of him that even "unto blood must he resist, striving against sin," and often very pleasant sin—pleasant to the flesh. Yes; but it was also

> "The word which told of peace,
> Of comfort in the strife,
> And joys that never cease."

To me also, O my Father, grant this great blessing—to love Thy law; to love it in my inmost soul.

In this verse we have the expression of the heart of the Lord Jesus, when the tempter said, "All these things will I give Thee."

73 Thy hands have made me and fash-

ioned me: O give me understanding, that I may learn Thy commandments.

We may hear in this verse the Human nature of the ever-blessed Son, speaking to His Divine nature, yet not as though they were, or could be separate, or separated; "God and Man is one Christ."

Again, as we know that the expression of the Prophet, "the arm of the Lord[k]," means the Lord Jesus; so here, we may feel ourselves addressing Him and saying, "Thou by Whom and for Whom all things were created, hast made and fashioned me."

And for what hast Thou made me? That where Thou art, there also I, Thy servant, may be; that I may see Thee as Thou art, and become like unto Thee; for this Thy hands have made me; made me different from other works of Thy hands, by fashioning a soul within my body, and by the great gift of reason. Cleanse Thou that soul, O Lord, illumine Thou that reason, that I may be able always to see and choose 'that good part," and abide stedfastly with

[k] S. John xii. 38.

Thee; for unto Thee, O Lord, do I owe my being.

74 They that fear Thee will be glad when they see me: because I have put my trust in Thy word.

Thy holy ones on earth will rejoice on seeing the sinner converted unto Thee, and as they and he hope, growing in grace and in Thy favour.

They will rejoice over him and with him, even as do Thy holy ones above, the angels in heaven.

They will rejoice for themselves, for they will understand that Thou art accomplishing the number of Thine elect, and hastening Thy kingdom.

They will rejoice for Thee, yea, and with Thee, for they will see Thy mercy in each soul brought to repentance; they will know that Thou, the good Shepherd, having sought, hast found, and art seeing of the travail of Thy soul, and been satisfied.

75 I know, O Lord, that Thy judgments are right: and that Thou of very faithfulness hast caused me to be troubled.

I know that my pains and afflictions in

this world are all "the due reward of my deeds," but I know more; I know that in true faithfulness to Thine own character as the God of Love, in true faithfulness to Thy blessed promises in Christ, in true faithfulness to my dull and erring soul, Thou hast caused me to be troubled.

"Faithful are the wounds of a friend," and who is such a friend as He "Who sticketh closer than a brother?" The Captain of our Salvation was Himself made perfect through sufferings.

The verse will bear another meaning. I know that the judgment hereafter of the Great Judge of all the earth will indeed be right; and if I am troubled with the fear of this now, as in truth I am, this, O Lord, is of Thy faithfulness, that I may "fly for refuge to the Hope set before me,"—Thyself, O Jesu, my Saviour.

And in this my trouble, whether it be Thy present chastening, or my troubled soul, when I think of the day when I shall stand naked and opened before Thee; in this my trouble, and in all my troubles,

76 O let Thy merciful kindness be my comfort: according to Thy word unto Thy servant.

For to that alone do I look, on that alone do I lean.

"Have mercy upon me, have mercy upon me, most merciful Father: for Thy Son our Lord Jesus Christ's sake forgive me all that is past, and grant that I may ever hereafter serve and please Thee in newness of life, to the honour and glory of Thy Name;" so shall I find the comfort of Thy mercy.

77 O let Thy loving mercies come unto me, that I may live: for Thy law is my delight.

God's servant has told us, how he not only kept God's law, but that his whole heart was in it; yet *for life*, as we see here, he leaned only on the "loving mercies" of that God Who had not then come in the flesh, so as to be seen of men: as nearly as was then possible, he expresses what S. Paul expressed afterwards, "not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ."

Not mercy, but "mercies;" so shall all the

diseases of my soul be healed: but all Thy mercies are to be found in Thy Son. Let Him dwell in me then, O my God, and my soul shall live, and be strong in the Lord.

"Enter my opening heart:
Fill it with love and peace, and light from Heaven:
Give me Thyself—for all in thee is given:
Come,—never to depart."

78 Let the proud be confounded, for they go wickedly about to destroy me: but I will be occupied in Thy commandments.

"The proud," the evil spirits, the followers of him who said in his pride, "I will ascend into heaven, I will be like the Most High;" let them be confounded, be put to shame and confusion, be utterly frustrated in their plans against me; for their one sole object is to turn me away from Thee my God now, that I may be for ever separated from Thee, for that indeed is death everlasting.

"Let the proud be confounded, but" let this mind be in me which was also in Christ Jesus"—the mind of lowliness and humility, so shall I not be confounded.

But "the proud" may mean earthly enemies,

then the confusion for which the Psalmist prays, is the shame which follows on conviction of sin, God-given shame, that God's mercy may come.

79 Let such as fear Thee, and have known Thy testimonies : be turned unto me.

Such may have been the prayer of S. Paul also, before "the Son of consolation took him to the Apostles.

Such should be the prayer of all who by their lives have given offence to Thy Church and to Thee, in order that there may be—

1. An open testimony to their repentance and reconciliation.

2. That they may have the strength, which the company and countenance of Thy children give.

There may be in this verse a dim anticipation of the doctrine of the Communion of Saints.

80 O let my heart be sound in Thy statutes : that I be not ashamed.

"My heart"—my very true, whole, real self.

"Be sound"—be whole, without a flaw

"blameless;" what words,—"Heart," and "sound."

"No man can serve two masters," (therefore must the heart be sound). "As for me and my house we will serve the Lord," and "so shall I not be confounded while I have respect unto all Thy commandments," —not confounded here, nor ashamed before Thee at Thy coming.

"Is thy heart right, as My heart is with thy heart," is the question which the ever-blessed Son of God and Son of man day by day asks of us, whom He has regenerated, for whom He is preparing a home? And what is my answer,—the answer of my heart, open as it is to Him? The prayer of this verse shall be the answer: Let it be: lead it to be: make it to be: and ever more and more thoroughly.

81 My soul hath longed for Thy salvation: and I have a good hope because of Thy word.

"Thy salvation," that is, Him Who is Thy salvation even unto the ends of the earth; and my "hope," as hath been the hope of "many Prophets and righteous men," is that I may see Him. So we may understand

the Psalmist, hungering and thirsting for Thee.

But it was not given to him: he died, having seen his hope, but only afar off, and been persuaded of Him.

He longed for Thee, O Lord, Whom yet he knew but imperfectly: he longed for Thee, he hoped to see Thee: and I,—who do know Thee, Who Thou art, what Thou hast done, what Thou hast given, what Thou hast promised,—I am ashamed, and blush, O my God, at my coldness and want of heart, at the very faint desire I have to see Thee.

82 Mine eyes long sore for Thy word: saying, O when wilt Thou comfort me?

With the sight of that Word, Who, being God from everlasting, would in the fulness of time become man, to live, and die, and rise again; then, when He had departed, would send "another Comforter" to be in His place, "even the Spirit of truth, Who proceedeth from the Father."

And the comfort which Thy servants should seek from Thee, O Thou Spirit of grace and holiness, what is it? Thine own Presence within them to sanctify them; Thy

grace enabling them to subdue their own wills, yea, to yield them up, with calm, full trust to Thee, saying from the very soul, "not what I will, but what Thou:" not what I in my weakness, and blindness, and misery, and sin, but what Thou in Thy holiness, and wisdom, and love. Oh to me even now at the last, Oh to me, Thou Spirit of love and pity.

83. For I am become like a bottle in the smoke: yet do I not forget Thy statutes.

His case Who cried upon the Cross, "I thirst."

That cry, that thirst, was for me.

The Psalmist must not be understood as if he were speaking of only outward troubles and persecutions; by such, indeed, the soul is sometimes tempted to forget God, and avenge itself; yet it is rather by inward sorrows that it becomes parched up.

Sometimes God wills that it should wait long for comfort: Oh let it then beware of compassing itself about with sparks of its own kindling[1]; let it remember, "They who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength."

[1] Isaiah l. 11.

Sometimes it becomes dry, and insensible to spiritual things; hard, and dull to realize the blessed Presence within. Then let it remember the "Tarry thou the Lord's leisure," and strive on in His ways, knowing that in keeping of the commandments there *is* great reward, though it may be for a time unfelt.

"Hope thou in the Lord, and keep His ways, and He shall promote thee," for "to Him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God." Thy promise, Thou blessed Spirit of Truth.

84 How many are the days of Thy servant: when wilt Thou be avenged of them that persecute me?

How many are my days? "Few and evil," and gone "like a shadow," and "as the days of a hireling." How many shall they be? Thou alone, O God, canst tell, for Thou alone canst tell Eternity, and I—O wondrous, awful thought—I am Eternal.

"When wilt Thou be avenged of them tha persecute me?"

The cry of the whole Church to God against Satan and his ministers; of that

portion of the Church which is at rest, "How long, O Lord, holy and true:" so also of that portion which is still militant here on earth, for "they are daily fighting and troubling us."

But crying thus, let us not forget "that it is not for us to know the times, or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power." Thy work, O my soul, is to wait patiently upon Him, Watching, Praying, Striving, Trusting.

85 The proud have digged pits for me: which are not after Thy law.

O Lord Jesu Christ, for Whom the proud dug pits, as when they sought to catch Thee in Thy talk, that they might deliver Thee into the power of the Governor; and for these their pits, quite contrary to Thy law, they pleaded Thy law, saying, "we have a law, and by our law He ought to die:" Who also hast warned us, that the time would come when killing Thy servants would be thought good service to God; now in these evil days, I beseech Thee, watch over Thy Church, "that those evils, which the craft and subtilty of the devil or

man worketh against us, be brought to nought;" and strengthen her, that I and all her children by our holy lives may glorify Thee, Who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end.

86 All Thy commandments are true: they persecute me falsely; O be Thou my help.

Yea, all from Thee is "true:" but "digging pits" and laying snares are from the proud, and pride is from him who was a liar and murderer from the beginning:" hence, from him all the heresies and schisms which have harassed the Church and torn her; hence, from him manifold evils and sorrows on the earth.

"They persecute me falsely." So it was with Thee in Thine own Person, O my Saviour: and since then so it has been with Thee in the persons of Thy servants, and all, falsely: for they sought, and such as are yet alive now seek, (and all of them through Thy grace,) to keep Thy commandments: yet may we not be ashamed, but rather glorify Thee, on this behalf, for such persecution.

Meanwhile, as "all who will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution," if not from men, yet from Satan, "I give myself unto prayer." "O be Thou my Help, for Thou, O Lord, art my Defender: be Thou my Help, for vain is the help of man."

87 They had almost made an end of me upon earth: but I forsook not Thy commandments.

"Persecuted, but not forsaken: cast down, but not destroyed:" "almost an end," but only "almost:" for Thy servant was sustained by Thee, O Lord, and by Thy grace he held fast to Thee.

And Satan would fain make an end of me, even to-day, to cut short my time of repentance: but my trust is in Thee, O Lord.

And persecutors have thought to destroy Thy Church, O Lord; yea, have thought that they had prevailed to do so, and had blotted out Thy truth by heresy, but it was only "almost:" Thy promise standeth sure, and "the gates of hell shall not prevail,"—all glory be to Thee,—neither against Thy Church, nor against Thy children who forsake not Thy commandments.

88. O quicken me after Thy loving-kindness : and so shall I keep the testimonies of Thy mouth.

For after such a deliverance as that mentioned in the preceding verse, more than ever did the Psalmist feel the call to glorify Thee, to make the life which Thou hadst preserved a trophy of Thy might: hence his prayer, "O quicken me after Thy loving-kindness," according to that mercy and goodness which has wrought such a deliverance for me, and so, quickened by Thee, strengthened with Thy strength, "shall I keep the testimonies of Thy mouth."

The verse reminds one of the fresh "steadfastly purposing to lead a new life," after each fresh quickening by the "living Bread, which cometh down from Heaven" so unweariedly.

89 O Lord, Thy word : endureth for ever in heaven.

So even in the days wherein He lived as man on earth, did He, the Consubstantial, speak of Himself as "the Son of man, Who *is* in heaven [m]."

[m] S. John iii. 13.

So also Thy word, in the sense of Thy will: it endureth for ever in the perfect obedience of the holy angels.

And that word "endureth," implies firmness, constancy, unchangeableness, calm decision, so different from man's weakness, and uncertainties, and hesitations, which though not in themselves sinful, are yet such hindrances to our growth in grace. But this is the Creator and the creature; Thou, O God, and I.

It endureth for ever, then is it always the same. The faith, the creed of the Apostles, is the faith to-day, and will be for ever; we may neither add to it, nor take from it.

90 Thy truth also remaineth from one generation to another: Thou hast laid the foundation of the earth, and it abideth.

"Thy truth," Thy Son, not only "the Truth," but Thine, being One with Thee.

"Thy truth," the word of Thy truth, "the faith once delivered to the Saints," "the form of sound words," "that form of doctrine which was delivered to us."

"Thy truth," that is, Thy truthfulness, Thy faithfulness to the word Thou hast spoken.

These all remain, yea, and will remain; for as

"Thou hast laid the foundation of the earth, and it abideth;"

Abideth even as Thou hast laid it; "abideth," even because it is Thou Who hast laid it, so Thy truth remaineth, because it is Thine: yea, and will remain;. for when this earth shall have passed away, even then, in "the new heavens and the new earth," will Thy truth be, true and unchanging as Thyself, my God.

91 They continue this day according to Thine ordinance: for all things serve Thee.

"They continue," because they serve Thee: had they failed in their service, they had ceased to be.

"All things," yes, "the wind and the sea obey Him," and the tree withers away when He speaks, and "the stars in their courses" fight against "His enemies;" yes, all things; and all men? They who have been made in Thine image and likeness, to whom Thou hast given the great gift of reason, and when they will, the greater gift of Thyself, what of them? They too serve Thee: for, con-

sciously or unconsciously, they are working out Thy will and purpose.

Oh that mine may be a willing service, glad and bright in faith, and hope, and love. Oh that my offering may be, "a free heart," "holy and acceptable," through Jesus Christ.

92 If my delight had not been in Thy law: I should have perished in my trouble.

That is, through lack of faith in Thy Providence. "Perished," even as the world of the ungodly perished when the flood of waters came in upon them, and the heaven was darkness over them, and they had "no place to flee unto."

Even as Hezekiah would have perished when the king of Assyria came against him, if he had not had Thee to flee unto.

"If my delight had not been in Thy law," that is, if it had been in anything out of Thy law, or out of Thee.

Oh the amazing strength to be found in ready, willing self-renouncing, in cheerful submission, in glad serving.

"Toil on, and in thy toil rejoice,
For toil comes rest, for exile home:
Soon shalt thou hear the Bridegroom's voice,
The midnight past, 'Behold, I come.'"

93 I will never forget Thy commandments: for with them Thou hast quickened me.

Here "quickened" may be taken to refer primarily—not of course solely—to the preceding verse, and to mean, "given me that delight in Thy law, that trust in Thy never-failing Providence, ordering all things both in heaven and earth, which has saved me from being overwhelmed and sinking in the sea of troubles."

So understanding the word, the teaching of the whole verse will be, "if I would attain to that delight in Thy will, which to the Psalmist proved such a source of strength and safety, I must be diligent in keeping the commandments.

There is a tone of earnest gratitude in the verse. By means of the commandments, Thou hast given to Thy servant to enjoy on earth an angel's life, therefore he will keep those commandments in everlasting remembrance, and Thee also, Who gave both them and the grace whereby he kept them.

94 I am Thine, O save me: for I have sought Thy commandments.

O great and blessed Truth. Thine. Thine

by creation: Thine by regeneration: Thine by the gift of the eternal Spirit in my Confirmation: Thine, as often as by Thy mercy I draw near to Thine altar, there to receive His Body and Blood Who is my Lord and my God. Thine, too, by the earnest wish of my soul: manifested in my seeking to fulfil Thy commandments. O that in my daily life I were more truly, more unreservedly Thine. Yet I may be, for with Thy Saints I pray, "O save me."

"Thine am I, Lord, for ever Thine:
I to Thy majesty Divine,
All that I am or have resign:
Each thought to Thee, my Saviour dear,
Subdue, let nought of earth draw near;
In silence I Thy voice would hear.
Lo, at Thy feet I wait Thy will,
Let that alone my being fill;
All earthly passions calm and still."

95 The ungodly laid wait for me to destroy me: but I will consider Thy testimonies.

So did the ungodly to the Lord Jesus, "laying wait for Him, and seeking to catch something out of His mouth that they might accuse Him."

So do the evil spirits even now for my soul, if so be they may entangle me in such sin as may "quench the Spirit," and leave me destroyed. "But I will consider Thy testimonies," and so have counsel and strength for the war.

1. The warning, that if the devil be allowed to enter his house again, he will bring with him seven others.

2. The admonition, to take to me the whole armour of God, and be clothed with humility.

3. The promise, that I shall not be tempted above my strength.

4. And, above all, Thy testimonies to and concerning Jesus my Master and Strength.

"Are thy toils and woes increasing?
Are the foe's attacks unceasing?
Look with faith unclouded,
Gaze with eye unshrouded,
On the Cross."

96 I see that all things come to an end: but Thy commandment is exceeding broad.

All created things: "The world passeth away, and the lusts thereof," its joys and

its sorrows: and all temptations to sin: they also will come to an end; and this, it may be, one should especially remember in connection with the preceding verse. The laying in wait of the ungodly will not be for long; let me hold fast my profession a little longer, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of my faith. Temptations and trials will not last; Thy commandment will: and the word here is commandment, not commandments; the commandment which is in an especial manner Thine, the "new commandment," "that we love one another, as Thou hast loved us:" and "by love serve one another." This is exceeding broad, embracing all; it lasts through eternity, for "charity never faileth."

97 Lord, what love have I unto Thy law: all the day long is my study in it.

He meant what great love, what real, deep, true, active love; yet he had never been made partaker of Thy Son, neither had he more than the shadow, not the very image of the heavenly things: and I, who am a child of the Holy Catholic Church, and so of Thee, can only say, how poor is my love

for Thee and Thine, how weak, how often thrust aside; while the world, or self, is allowed to occupy me, and to fill Thy place, and to sit on Thy throne. I confess this to Thee my God, I confess it to Thee, that Thou mayest quicken me, and wean my soul from all that is not Thee, for Jesu's sake; and that I may come to love Thy law more and more, I will study it, so shall I through Thy grace see more and more of the beauty of holiness, and be won to it.

98 Thou through Thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me.

"Wiser" with that true and heavenly wisdom, which in the end will bring us unto life everlasting.

"Wiser than mine enemies," for at the very best their wisdom is but foolishness, yea, "earthly, sensual, devilish," seeing that it leads them to strive with Thee, the Almighty, and to rebel against Thee.

"Wiser," again, than they, for Thou hast brought me into Him, Who is Himself "the wisdom of God."

"For they," Thy commandments, "are ever

with me:" ever in my heart to keep them; ever in my mouth to teach them, therefore, have I "the wisdom which is from above." All praise, all glory be to Thee, O Lord.

99 I have more understanding than my teachers: for Thy testimonies are my study.

Prophetic of our Lord in the midst of the doctors, when He was twelve years old.

But for myself? Then only can I be said to have understanding of anything, when I know its real nature,—why it was created, to what use it is to be put, and so on. But such understanding can be gained only from the Designer and the Maker.

For what, then, has the world been made? Why am I in it? Why in my particular sphere? Why is Satan allowed to tempt me? To all such questions Thy testimonies give the true answer. For Thy glory, O my God. Thus have I a right understanding from Thee, the Only Wise, because for understanding, I seek to Thy testimonies.

100 I am wiser than the aged: because I keep Thy commandments.

Keeping the commandments is therefore not only wisdom, but the way to become

more and more wise, nearer and nearer to Thy wisdom, Who art wisdom.

God, Who didst teach the hearts of Thy faithful people, by sending down upon them the light of Thy Holy Spirit; grant us by the same Spirit to have a right judgment in all things, that we may both perceive and know what things we ought to do, and also may have grace and power faithfully to fulfil the same, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

101 I have refrained my feet from every evil way: that I may keep Thy word.

"From *every* evil way," so only can we keep Thy word, for "he that offends in one point is guilty of all."

"From every *evil* way;" that is, from every way which he knew to be evil. He did not sin wilfully; just as S. John describing the Christian as he ought to be, saith, "He cannot sin;" just as S. Paul saith, "I know nothing by myself," that is, "against myself," yet he addeth immediately, "yet am I not hereby justified." No, for *that* he looked to union with Christ, to being cleansed in the Precious Blood; and such

as I? Cleanse Thou me, O Lord, and I shall be cleansed; heal me, and I shall be healed.

102 I have not shrunk from Thy judgments: for Thou teachest me.

Thy judgments; Thy rebukings for sin; Thy "heavy hand;" Thy chastisement: from these—not joyous, but grievous—I have not shrunk back, for by them Thou teachest,

1. That it is indeed an evil thing and bitter to forsake Thee.

2. That the pleasures of sin perish with the act of sin, entailing sorrow in the end.

3. That Thou lovest with a wondrous love, not withholding chastisement when we need it; not forsaking us, as Thou mightest.

Or, by the words "Thou teachest," the Psalmist may be understood as saying, "I am well assured, even from Thine own word, that Thy rebukes are but the chastenings of Thy love, that I might not be condemned with the wicked, and that therefore I should not shrink from them."

"O Lord my God, do Thou Thy holy will,
I will lie still."

103 O how sweet are Thy words unto

my throat : yea, sweeter than honey unto my mouth.

"With Angels and Archangels, and all the company of heaven to laud and magnify Thy glorious Name;" to the inner man, sweet indeed is the privilege of Thy Catholic Church.

Sweet, again, it is to be allowed day after day to proclaim in her words the grand truths of the mysterious Godhead—of the Incarnation, of the Death, of the Resurrection, of the Ascension, of the Return, of the eternal Spirit, of the Apostolic Church; and the blessings Thou bestowest on her, and in her.

"Yea, sweeter than honey unto my mouth" are these truths to my soul, even now. What, then, will it be to chant with the redeemed hereafter the song of Moses and the Lamb? and to see with open face, Him the glorious Trinity, in Whom all the truths of the Creed centre and abide!

104 Through Thy commandments I get understanding : therefore I hate all evil ways.

"Understanding," that is, a true and right

understanding; an understanding of the truth, an understanding in the soul; "a knowledge of the holy."

"Therefore I hate all evil ways."

To forsake all evil ways is indeed a high grace; not to wish for them, is higher; but to hate them, is the highest; yet even to this will the diligent walking in Thy ways bring us. And if to this be added a corresponding love for all Thou lovest (as surely there will be, for keeping Thy commandment from the heart begets in the heart love for Him Who gave the commandments), then have we a sort of heaven by anticipation, lacking only that which in truth is heaven, the sight of the Invisible, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

"If thou desire wisdom, keep the commandments; and the Lord shall give her unto thee."

105 Thy word is a lantern unto my feet: and a light unto my paths.

Thy word, O God, is Thy Son, the Lord Jesus. He is a Lantern as regards His human nature, which, by being taken into God, had light poured into It. He is Light as

regards His divine nature, being Himself the Uncreated Light. Being One, He is at once both Light and Lantern; the one from everlasting, the other He became in time, "for us men, and for our salvation;" yea, for me, and my salvation.

Again, the written word, the Scripture of truth, having been given by Him, is Light; yet it is a lantern also, for being written, it guards the light, which is itself, against withering blasts of error: and giving heed to this light while we are in the dark place of this world, our feet will not wander, our paths will be clear.

"O send out Thy Light and Thy Truth, that they may lead me."

106 I have sworn, and am stedfastly purposed: to keep Thy righteous judgments.

So I, at my Baptism, when I was sworn to fight under the banner of the Cross, against the world, the flesh, and the devil, and on this, was made Thy member, O Lord Jesu.

So, again, at my Confirmation, when I renewed "the solemn promise and vow that

was made" in my name; and on this, was "sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance," purchased for me by Thee, O Lord Jesu.

So again and again, in solemn hours of self-examination; and on this, have been received at Thine altar, there to partake of Thy Body and Thy Blood, O Lord Jesu.

And now to-day, what am I? Where do I find myself, as regards Thee, O long, long-suffering Master?

107 I am troubled above measure: quicken me, O Lord, according to Thy word.

"Troubled above measure."

So was He Who said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death."

"Quicken Thou me according to Thy word."

And according to this prayer was His cry answered, when "there appeared unto Him an angel from heaven strengthening Him." And all this for the cleansing, healing, strengthening of my soul, yea, of all our souls.

And I, also, O my Father, if ever in Thy

Providence I am sore burdened with affliction, or

"When worn and tired I sigh,
With that more fearful war within,
When passion's storms wax loud and high,
And brooding o'er remembered sin
The heart dies down; Oh mightiest then,
Come ever true, come ever near,
And wake my slumbering love again,
Spirit of God's most holy fear."

108 Let the free-will offerings of my mouth please Thee, O Lord: and teach me Thy judgments.

"The offerings of my mouth;" they are my prayers, my praises, my thanksgivings. But that the words of these may be acceptable before Thee, let me see to it,

1. That they are realities, not mere words,
2. That they come from my heart.
3. That my life is in accordance with them.
4. That they are offered in humility.

Utterly valueless are they all by themselves, only acceptable (yea, precious) when the great Mediator takes them up, purifies them, hallows them, and offers them.

The prayers "of all saints," even in an angel's hand, needed the "much incense" of Thy merits, O King of Saints[n].

"And teach me Thy judgments."

That my doings, day by day, may be in harmony with my words.

109 My soul is alway in my hand: yet do I not forget Thy law.

Even as David said, "Truly as the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, there is but a step between me and death," a death of violence, a death from persecutors. Yet, notwithstanding the weakness of his mortal nature, he stood firm with Thee, for Thou didst stand by him upholding him. And that same Presence is pledged to thee, my soul; "be strong, therefore, and very courageous."

In another way the words may be understood, "My soul is alway in my hand;" always being held up, and offered to Thee, her Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier, her only real Good, to be wholly Thine; yet not in contemplation only, but in works of prac-

[n] Rev. viii. 3.

tical holiness, does she occupy herself; but this is Thy grace, Thy mercy.

110 The ungodly have laid a snare for me: but yet I swerve not from Thy commandments.

"Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed," forbidding any prayer to be offered save unto the king, "he went into his house, and kneeled upon his knees three times a-day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime,"—in this, a type of his and our Saviour.

So, too, in the early days of the Church, the noble army of martyrs had many snares laid for it, yet held fast by Thee, O God, even unto death; because they were held up by Thee.

And I also, O my Father, I have, as they, (for they and I are of Thy one Church, and even now have in some way communion,) Thy promised help; yea, Thy presence with me, that I neither fear, nor fail, nor fall. Strengthen Thou my will, that I choose more firmly "the good part," which, if I but so choose, will not be taken from me.

111 Thy testimonies have I claimed as

mine heritage for ever: and why? they are the very joy of my heart.

"Thy testimonies," Thy truths, O Thou God of truth, "have I claimed;" for when I was made a member of Christ, I was made Thy child, and inheritor of all that belongs to Thee. Thy truths, therefore, have I claimed, that they may be my everlasting portion, my joy and gladness.

But the covenant that was then made? the three great promises I gave? alas, my God, how I have departed from them, Thou knowest! therefore will I claim nothing as of right, but I will put Thee in remembrance of Thy word: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just ('faithful' to His promise, 'just' to the merits of Christ,) to forgive us." And I will ask Thee, of Thy mercy, for that, as a gift, which I cannot claim; and to say of me, "This my son was dead, and is alive."

112 I have applied my heart to fulfil Thy statutes alway: even unto the end.

"Even unto the end," "to walk in the same all the days of my life;" for "he that endureth unto the end shall be saved."

"I have applied my heart." The obedience I will give, due as it is by every right to Thee, shall be a willing, cheerful obedience; it shall be as real and true within, where man's eye cannot see, as without, for

"The dearest offering He can crave
His portion in our souls to prove,
What is it to the gift He gave,
The only Son of His dear love?"

"I have applied my heart," "yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."

113 I hate them that imagine evil things: but Thy law do I love.

Who are the imaginers of evil, but "the proud," "the ungodly," "the soul-persecutors," "the wicked," of other verses. And who are they? not the unhappy ones who are taken captive by Satan, and work his will; but Satan himself, and his angels. And truly, when we call to mind what they have done, and what they would do but for Thy restraining hand, O All-loving, we may well hate them.

But man cannot live only by hating sin

and Satan; there remains in him still so much of the blessed image in which he was created, he must love something, hence he adds:

"But Thy law do I love."

Oh may I hate as he hated, and love as he loved, and ever more and more.

114 Thou art my defence and shield: and my trust is in Thy word.

The Guard and Guardian, the Preserver and the Strengthener, yea, the Strength and Protection, alike of my soul and body. "In Thee I live and move and have my being," and "by Thee have I been holden up ever since I was born:" "my praise shall be always of Thee."

"And my trust,"—that Thou wilt continue to be all Thou hast been, all, my spirit, soul, and body can need, until Thou callest my soul hence, and my body is laid in the grave,—"is in Thy word," Thy oft-repeated and most gracious promises.

And not even at the departure hence of Thy children, will Thy care cease; for "the souls of the righteous are in Thy Hand," and their bodies Thou wilt raise at the last day,

that the whole man may glorify Thee for all Thy long-enduring love, and be with Thee for ever.

"O God, our Help in ages past,
Our Hope for years to come;
Be Thou our Strength while troubles last,
And our eternal Home."

115 Away from me, ye wicked: I will keep the commandments of my God.

So "Jesus answered and said, Get thee behind Me, Satan."

And there are temptations which can be met only by such words and such resolve, spoken sharply, sternly, boldly,—and then if I have faith, and doubt not, the tempter will flee away, and good angels will rejoice over me, because Thy strength, O Lord of angels, will have been put forth in me, as it was put forth for me on "the exeeeding high mountain."

This verse teaches me,—

1. Not to argue with Satan,—"away from me."

2. The great power of a strong resolve, "I *will* keep the commandments of my God," "of *my* God."

But it is not enough to have driven Satan away, we need to be settled in the good way; hence there follows the prayer,

116 O stablish me according to Thy Word, that I may live: and let me not be disappointed of my hope.

"That I may live:" for then do we really live, live before Thee; then is life strong within us, when we are stablished, strengthened, settled by Thee, and in Thee.

"My hope:" "and now, Lord, what is my hope? truly my hope is even in Thee," that Thou wilt stablish me in every good word and work; nay, it is more than this, "Thou Thyself art my hope" in this world, "and my portion in the land of the living."

Hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given to us.

Another prayer follows, on ver. 115.

117 Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe: yea, my delight shall be ever in Thy statutes.

"I shall be safe;" safe indeed, and only then, safe. Hold Thou me up, my spirit, my and my body; and especially, O my

strength, in those hours when faith waxes feeble, as Thou didst hold up the father of the sick child, saying, "Fear not, only believe;" or when despondency falls upon me, then put forth Thine arm, as Thou didst to the sinking Apostle, and hold me up; "so shall I be safe."

And as through life, so in dying; yea, and when I stand before the dread tribunal, still hold Thou me up, Thou my only trust and hope, and so shall I be safe; and, held up by Thee, my delight shall be ever in Thy statutes, in shewing forth Thy praise, in ascribing unto Thee the honour due unto Thy Name.

118 Thou hast trodden down all them that depart from Thy statutes: for they imagine but deceit.

Here we may understand the angels which "kept not their first estate," for they indeed rising up against God, imagined nothing but deceit; and them Thou hast trodden down "as the mire in the street."

And although for a time they may be permitted to go to and fro in the earth, and to walk up and down in it[o], if so be they can

[o] Job i. 7.

seduce Thy children from Thee; yet they have, as they know, but a short time, and finally Thou wilt beat down Satan under our feet, if only we cling close to Thee.

If, however, by "ungodly," we are to understand, sinners who continue in impenitence, then the expression, "Thou hast trodden them down," denotes the certainty of their condemnation, as certain, as if they had already perished.

119 Thou puttest away all the ungodly of the earth like dross: therefore I love Thy testimonies.

"We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what Thou hast done in their time of old: how Thou hast driven out the heathen with Thy hand, and planted them in: how Thou hast destroyed the nations, and cast them out."

And what was thus done visibly in the sight of men, in the earthly Canaan, is even now being carried on, only invisibly: the "Refiner and Purifier" is even now sitting, gradually gathering out His elect and refining them, gradually putting farther off those who will not be gathered, until at last He puts them away.

"Therefore I love Thy testimonies;" that precious word, which assures me that Thou wilt in no wise cast out any who will come to Thee, that Thou art longing to be my Refiner and Purifier, even mine, O Thou most Holy.

120 My flesh trembleth for fear of Thee: and I am afraid of Thy judgments.

I hear of Thy judgments, Thou God of truth, upon the rebel angels: I hear of Thy judgments, Thou God of love, upon "the heathen that have not known Thee, and the kingdoms that have not called upon Thy name:" I hear of "the wrath of the Lamb," and truly my flesh trembleth, and my flesh hath cause to tremble.

Yet even here is Thy mercy; the prophet said, "I trembled in myself, that I might find rest in the day of trouble[p]," that is, rest in Thee: so Thou causest my flesh to tremble, that I may fly unto Thee and find a refuge, be hidden by Thee, yea, hidden in Thee,

"Safe in Thy wounded side,
Where only broken hearts their sin and shame may hide."

[p] Hab. iii. 16.

121 I deal with the thing that is lawful and right: O give me not over unto mine oppressors.

That is, to those who would oppress my soul even unto death, because I am Thine; "leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation."

Dealing with that which is right is therefore one condition of acceptable prayer: even as the Truth has said, "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." Now we abide in Him only by partaking of His Body and Blood: and of these we can partake to our soul's health, only when His words abide in us, that is, when we deal only with that which is lawful and right. This verse therefore, is, in an especial sense, the prayer of the earnest-souled communicant.

122 Make Thou Thy servant to delight in that which is good: that the proud do me no wrong.

For much wrong and sore evil will the proud do unto me, if I suffer myself to be persecuted by them into forsaking that

which is good, and into walking in unholy ways, and so constrain Thee at last to leave me.

The Psalmist prays not simply for grace to do right, but for the great grace to delight in the right, because of the wondrous strength to be found in such delight. And I, unworthy, unworthy, yet "Thy servant," am bold in Christ and through Him, to make the same prayer, and so shall I be safe from the proud, mine enemies. "Deliver me from mine enemies, O God; defend me from them that rise up against me."

123 Mine eyes are wasted away with looking for Thy health: and for the word of Thy righteousness.

This may be taken as expressing in words what the Lord Jesus felt, when He so "stedfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem," that His disciples following Him were afraid.

It certainly expresses the craving which the Saints have felt, either, 1. For the Incarnation, as Hezekiah, "Mine eyes fail with looking upward;" or 2. For their own release, as S. Paul, "having a desire to depart and be with Christ."

It expresses also the waiting of the Church in Paradise, "How long, O Lord;" yes, and of us Thy penitent children here below, in our weary striving against sin, in our long struggles to be free from the tyranny which we have brought upon ourselves, by allowing its rule in years past.

"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."

124 O deal with Thy servant according unto Thy loving mercy: and teach mē Thy statutes.

After the cry of the preceding verse, these words seem to mean (they certainly may be so understood), "make no long tarrying, O my God."

And if by the word "statutes" we understand the whole will and counsel of God, then the verse may be taken to say, "If my struggle with sin be long and wearing, if temptations crowd upon me, and seem well-nigh endless, if my days be dark and troubled, teach Thou my heart to know that all this is only because Thou hast so willed it, Thou in Thy perfect wisdom and perfect love."

" Be your trials what they may,
Though as dark as night your way,
Though each hour the thorns increase,
Doubt not, ever floweth peace
From the Cross."

125 I am Thy servant, O grant me understanding: that I may know Thy testimonies.

"Thy servant," because the work of Thy hands; because Thou hast bought me, and that with Thine own life; because Thou hast made both my soul and body Thy dwelling-place. "Thy servant," therefore do I come to Thee.

And as the service Thou seekest from me is not only a willing but "a reasonable service," therefore I ask of Thee "understanding, that I may know Thy testimonies." Yet is there much in them which, in this world I cannot hope to understand, grant me then such portion of understanding as Thou knowest to be good: and when I cannot understand, grant me full, living faith; which in truth, in all that concerns Thee, Who "dwellest in the light which no man can approach unto," my reason, Thy gift, tells me is the highest exercise of reason.

126 It is time for Thee, Lord, to lay to Thine hand: for they have destroyed Thy law.

"To lay to Thine Hand," Thyself to enter upon the work, the blessed work, Thou hast set Thyself. So the Psalmist.

"To lay to Thine Hand," to "raise up Thy power and come among us, and with great might succour us." So the Church Militant.

"To lay to Thine Hand," to "finish the work and cut it short in righteousness." So they who are waiting for their perfect consummation and bliss both in body and soul.

In each case it is

1. A longing for Christ;
2. A confession of dependance upon Him.

127 For I love Thy commandments: above gold and precious stone.

What good can be compared with that whereby, if we abide in them, we ourselves by God's grace are made good?

"They have destroyed Thy law," but I "love" it. But how do they destroy it? I suppose in effect, by frustrating the purpose with which it was given; just as men de-

throne God from His Supremacy, when they allow the lust of the flesh, or the lust of the eye, or the pride of life, to *rule* their souls.

What, then, is the purpose of the commandments? I suppose, to be a hedge round about us, that we may not wander away, beguiled by Satan, into ways wherein Thou O Lord God art not, wherein we must perish if we continue in them. Well indeed, therefore, may we love the commandments above all earthly things, next to Him Who gave them. "O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my God, my goods are nothing unto Thee."

128 Therefore hold I straight all Thy commandments: and all false ways I utterly abhor.

Whatever the command may be, being Thine, it is to me good and wise and true and loving; "*all* the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth." This assurance is one blessed consequence of loving the commandments.

Another is, "all false ways I utterly abhor."

All ways but the one "way of holiness," "wherein the wayfaring man, though a fool,

shall not err," shall not fail to find Him Who is "the way," through Whom he shall "have access by one Spirit unto the Father."

Where there is real love of the commandments in the heart, then in that heart there must be abhorrence of evil, for "what concord hath Christ with Belial?" But the love and the abhorrence are both graces which increase and deepen, neither is perfected at once, or easily. Grant me in Thy love to grow in them more and more, until growth is no more needed, growing time being past.

129 Thy testimonies are wonderful: therefore doth my soul keep them.

Wonderful, O Lord, is the Truth of Thine Own Nature, Three in One, and One in Three; wonderful the truths of the Incarnation, of the Indwelling Spirit; wonderful the beauty of holiness; wonderful the glory of the king's daughter, the Holy Catholic Church; wonderful Thy forbearance and long-suffering; wonderful all Thou hast said and done, all Thy commandments, judgments, and testimonies.

"Therefore doth my soul keep them."

My soul, awe-struck with the sense of its

unworthiness in the presence of all Thy wonders, yet clinging with lowly trust to that Wonder of wonders; "I in them;" cleaving at once to the dust and to Thee: my soul keeps Thy testimonies, that it may at last itself become an object of wonder in the sight of Saints and Angels, beyond what it even now is, in being allowed and empowered to see Thee.

130 When Thy word goeth forth: it giveth light and understanding unto the simple.

For Thy Word, O Father, is "the true Light which lighteth every one that cometh into the world."

Yet is more light given to some than to others; most of all to the "simple," to the "babes" for whose enlightening the Word Himself giveth God thanks: and these, who are they? They who are unsuspicious of evil, and who are ready to believe, and not ashamed openly to avow their belief, and quick to obey in childlike, trustful love. To them "Jesus commits Himself[q]," in them He dwells, and to them He gives understanding.

[q] S. John ii. 24.

Hence I learn that I must unlearn; yea, how much I have to unlearn, that I may be wise with Thy Wisdom, and have the guidance of Thy Light.

131 I opened my mouth, and drew in my breath: for my delight was in Thy commandments.

The Psalmist seems to speak of his own eagerness, his panting for God's will; but the words speak also of the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, for never could there be one Who had delight in God's commandments, and then become a breathing being, save Thyself, O Son of God in eternity, Son of Mary in time.

But the words belong to me also, they teach me,

1. That then only am I living in real free life, when I delight in obeying God:

2. That then only am I fulfilling the object for which God breathed into me the breath of life, and I became a living soul.

132 O look Thou upon me, and be merciful unto me: as Thou usest to do unto those that love Thy Name.

"Look Thou upon me;" and what wilt

Thou see? One made in Thine image and likeness, but who has sadly marred and defaced Thy gracious work: one whom Thou hast re-created in Baptism, but who has recklessly marred that work also: one brought up in Thy faith, in Thy Holy Catholic Church, gifted with Thy blessed Spirit, and fed with the Body broken and the Blood shed, but whose whole soul has not been Thine: and dare I then say, "Look upon me?" Yea, Father, I will dare, but only in Christ. Look upon me as one whom He died to redeem, and wills to save; as one for whom He maketh intercession; as one who cometh unto Thee, because He said, "him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out." So look upon me, for so Thou art wont to look upon Thy Saints, and Thou wilt have mercy upon me.

133 Order my steps in Thy word: and so shall no wickedness have dominion over me.

"Order my steps," my every-day doings, common though they be in the eyes of the world; for much of "the beauty of holiness" lies in what are called trifles.

"In Thy word." After the example of the Incarnate Word; according to the teaching of the written word.

"And so," yea, so only, sin shall not have dominion over me; it will indeed be with me,—for through the weakness of our mortal nature we cannot always stand upright—but it will not be master. Thou alone, O Lord, shalt be Lord.

134 O deliver me from the wrongful dealings of men: and so shall I keep Thy commandments.

Feeling that these "wrongful dealings" of others were, as in truth they very often are, a sore hindrance in running "the race that was set before him;" a sore provocation to ungodly words or doings; the Psalmist prays for deliverance.

Yet, Thy blessed Spirit helping us, O my God, these very wrongful dealings — sad though they be in themselves, and saddening when we think of those who do such deeds, — may be made to bear "fruit unto holiness," whose end shall be "everlasting life;" for they give us occasions for intercession (even as He, "Father, forgive them,

for they know not what they do,") and for shewing meekness, and forbearance, and forgiveness.

If, then, Thy children pray to be delivered from them, it is in the sense which Thou hast taught. Suffer us not to be tempted above that we are able; but with the temptation make also a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it. Yea, grant us so to use the trial, that we may lose no portion of the good which it is Thy gracious purpose we should gain from it.

135 Shew the light of Thy countenance upon Thy servant: and teach me Thy statutes.

"The light of Thy countenance;" where is it, O Lord my God, my Holy One, but "in the face of Jesus Christ" "the true Light?"

Turn not Thy face from me, O Lord, lest I be troubled, though in truth I deserve nothing else.

Lift up Thy countenance upon me, O Lord, for in that countenance is life, and peace, and love, and sanctity. Lift it up upon me, that I may be able to lift up my soul to

Thee now, my face hereafter, for I am Thy servant.

And teach me Thy statutes, that by them I may know Thee; thus repeatedly do I pray this same prayer, such wealth of learning is there in Thy statutes, so dull is my heart to learn, and so slow.

"Lord, Thy word abideth,
And our footsteps guideth:
Who its truth believeth,
Light and joy receiveth."

136 Mine eyes gush out with water: because men keep not Thy law.

"And when He was come near, He beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, the things which belong unto thy peace."

So the great Pattern; and foreshadowing Him, His prophet, "Mine eye runneth down with rivers of water for the destruction of the daughter of my people[r]."

And I, what do I?

God seeketh not of His children actual tears; He does seek grief and distress of

[r] Lam. iii. 48.

soul, for the dishonour done to Him by wilful sinners, and for the misery they are storing up for themselves. Nay, He seeketh more than this, patient efforts to "convert the sinner from the error of his ways." And now before Thee, let me ask myself, "Am I, in Thy sight, heartless, and cold, and idle, and selfish? or, am I in any real measure, through Thy grace, doing what I can as for my own sinful soul, so for Thine erring ones around me?"

137 Righteous art Thou, O Lord: and true is Thy judgment.

Here the Psalmist asserts a fact. He is, as it were, rehearsing a creed; and when faith is weak, very strengthening to the soul it is, to say over and over some strong words of truth such as these.

We do not know what called forth the words from the Psalmist, perhaps some disappointment, some event contrary to his hope; then, hearing the still small voice saying, "What I do thou knowest not now," his soul in calm trust replies, "Righteous art Thou, O Lord," in all Thy will, in all Thine orderings; "and true is Thy judg-

ment" in this, and in everything, because the judgment is Thine.

So would I, O my Father, when my hopes are not fulfilled, when disappointments meet me in Thy Providence.

138 The testimonies that Thou hast commanded : are exceeding righteous and true.

In the previous verse, the Psalmist had yielded up his will in simple deference to the will of God. Here he confesses that all God had revealed, and, perhaps we may here say, especially the duty laid upon him of giving up his own will in calm loving trust, was "exceeding righteous and true."

Not only did he yield his will, but confessed the perfect right God had to require this, and everything of him.

Whatsoever Thou mayest command, O God, whatsoever Thou mayest require, in each and all I would acknowledge Thy Righteousness, and Thy Truth, and Thine absolute right over me.

"All I have to offer,
All I hope to be,
Body, soul, and spirit,
All I yield to Thee."

139 My zeal hath even consumed me: because mine enemies have forgotten Thy words.

Surely this verse describes Thy whole earthly life, O Lord Jesu; Thine ever-burning zeal to vindicate Thy Father's truth and holiness.

Nay, Thy zeal it was which at last consumed Thee, when Thou didst "lay down" Thy life upon the Cross, a perfect sacrifice, for those who had, by forgetting Thy law, of Thy people become Thine enemies, who would not have Thee to reign over them.

Nay, at the first, it was Thy zeal that they, who had become Thine enemies, might again be reconciled unto God, which brought Thee, when Thou sawest "That there was none to help," from Thy Throne above to Thy Cross below.

In Thy zeal for God, and in Thy Self-sacrifice, our great and blessed Pattern.

140 Thy word is tried to the uttermost: and Thy servant loveth it.

Truly He, "the Word," was so tried, when there was wrung from Him the bitter cry,

"My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

And Thy written Word, O Lord, Thy gracious loving promises, are ever being tried; Thy Saints wait in patient, living faith on Thee, and find them true. I have but to wait Thy time, not suffering myself to be turned from Thee, or to seek anything else but Thy will, and in due time most surely I shall reap.

Therefore, because it may be with such entire confidence received, with such wholeheartedness depended on, doth Thy servant love Thy Word.

141 I am small, and of no reputation: yet do I not forget Thy commandments.

Satan whispers, "Thou, what art thou? What force can words from thee have? What weight or influence can thy example have?"

Most true is it, O my God, that I am "small" in Thy Church, and "of no reputation," yet do I remember how the stripling sent by Thee, in Thy might slew the giant; how the fishermen and the tent-maker laboured and prevailed, because by Thee enabled;

how "there is no restraint with Thee to save by many or by few;" how "weak things," chosen by Thee, have confounded "the mighty;" therefore I, even I, "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" though I be, will yet labour on by Thy grace, according to Thy commandment, and leave the issue of my work in Thy Hands.

142 Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness: and Thy law is the truth.

Everlasting is Thy righteousness, O Lord Jesu, for it is Thine, and "Thou art the everlasting Son of the Father:" and everlasting is the righteousness which we need, to atone for our continual departure from righteousness; and hereafter it will be the joy of the saved, that not to any merit of their own, but to Thee and to Thy righteousness, they owe their salvation; and as their joy will be everlasting, so must be Thy righteousness, whereby they are filled with joy, Thy gift.

"And Thy law," which tells of the bringing in of this righteousness, and of how we, unrighteous, may in Thee be made righteous,

"is the truth;" the pure, simple, uncorrupted truth, O Lord, Thou God of truth. "Thy word is Truth."

143 Trouble and heaviness have taken hold upon me: yet is my delight in Thy commandments.

"Trouble and heaviness" took hold of Him, Who said, "Now is My Soul troubled;" of Whom it is written, "Jesus wept."

Even when to all outward seeming oppressed with earthly troubles, "delight" may be found in "Thy commandments," yea, will be, for earthly troubles cannot reach the soul; and to the soul trained in God's commandments, "trouble and heaviness" will be proofs of God's love.

"Whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth."

"Why art thou so heavy, O my soul, and why art thou so disquieted within me? O put thy trust in God; for I will yet give Him thanks, which is the help of my countenance, and my God."

"What seemed thy loss, will often prove
To be thy truest gain;
And suffering borne with patient love
A jewelled crown obtain."

144 The righteousness of Thy testimonies is everlasting : O grant me understanding, and I shall live.

"The righteousness of Thy testimonies is everlasting," for Thou art Thyself "from everlasting to everlasting."

"O grant me understanding, and I shall live."

That is, my soul shall abide in Thee, Who art her true life.

Now want of understanding of Thy word, or misunderstanding, is very dangerous to the soul's life. Heresy is very easily begotten of misunderstanding, and ignorance very easily leads to grave breaches of the commandments. Hence my prayer for understanding, for a right understanding, that I may know Thee as Thou art in truth, and not as men may fancy Thee ; and Thy blessed will, as it is in its purity. "O grant me understanding, and I shall live."

145 I call with my whole heart : hear me, O Lord, I will keep Thy statutes.

The Spirit Who inspired the Psalmist to write, taught him, among other truths, that there are certain conditions which man must

seek to fulfil, if he would have his prayers to be accepted. Here I learn two: 1. "With my whole heart." 2. That heart bent on doing God's will: as the Lord hath said, "If My words abide in you."

He says, "I call;" not, "I have called," nor yet, "I will call:" in every place then, and at all times, he prayed, he was always praying, his daily life was a prayer.

Even so would I live in an atmosphere of prayer, for Thou hast taught me that man "ought always to pray and not to faint."

146 Yea, even unto Thee do I call: help me, and I shall keep Thy testimonies.

"Even unto Thee," "glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders," "even unto Thee do I call;" even I, in all my sinfulness: for to whom else can I go? in whom else can I trust? who else will receive me? but Thou wilt, although Thou knowest me; Thou knowest, yet lovest us better than Thou knowest.

"Help me, and I shall keep Thy testimonies."

Help me, for Thou art my God, that I be no longer of those who idly say, "Lord,

Lord," but of those "who do the will of My Father which is in heaven."

This, then, should be the one great object of our prayers, that we may be doers of God's will, and so ever glorifying Him.

147 Early in the morning do I cry unto Thee: for in Thy word is my trust.

"O timely happy, timely wise,
Hearts that with early morn arise."

"Early in the morning" Jacob anointed the pillar, after his wondrous vision. "Early in the morning" Moses rose up to rear an altar to the Lord: Joshua, to compass Jericho for its fall: Gideon, to receive a gracious sign from God: David, to go on that journey which led to his slaying Goliath: Job, to offer sacrifice: the Apostles, to enter into the Temple to teach. So would I also, O Lord my God, early in the morning lift up to Thee a cry of thankfulness for Thy protection during the hours of darkness, a cry for guidance and strength during the day.

For my trust that Thou wilt guide and guard, is in that Word Who died, and

now lives to make intercession for me: and in His gracious promises in the written word.

148 Mine eyes prevent the night-watches: that I might be occupied in Thy words.

Not only, then, in the morning prime, but in the hours before the dawn, should I lift up my soul unto Thee; even as He, Who, "rising up a great while before day, departed into a solitary place to pray."

"Have I not remembered Thee on my bed, and thought upon Thee when I was waking, because Thou hast been my Helper?"

And to "be occupied in Thy words," means more than pondering them in my heart, and "comparing spiritual things with spiritual;" it means also, thinking of the work Thou hast given me to do: it may be ordinary earthly work: how I may best accomplish it, "as to the Lord and not unto men:" how I may make it all tend to Thy glory.

"If in the night I sleepless lie,
My soul with heavenly thoughts supply."

149 Hear my voice, O Lord, according unto Thy loving-kindness: quicken me, according as Thou art wont.

According to that loving-kindness which gave Thy Son to become Man, that so, being God and Man, He might be the Mediator between Thee and men: which moved that Son to promise that whatsoever we should ask in His Name He would do it: which moves Thy Spirit to dwell within us, that so we might pray in the Spirit and the Spirit pray within us: which hast given us the Catholic faith, that so we might pray in the truth. According to that loving-kindness hear Thou me, O my Father; hear me, and "quicken me as Thou art wont."

1. As Thou often hast quickened me, though sadly indeed have I responded to it.

2. As Thou art wont to quicken Thy Saints, that they may be wholly Thine.

150 They draw nigh that of malice persecute me: and are far from Thy law.

So did wicked men draw near to the Lord Jesus, seeking to "entangle Him in His talk;" so drew near also Judas and the band of men and officers. So it ever is

still, when Thou, being good and gracious, shewest Thy love by quickening us to do Thy will; then come the evil ones, Satan and his angels, who even hate Thy law, because it is Thine and therefore good, to persecute us, to hinder us, and to throw us back.

Yet, even out of this persecution may we gain good, for we may learn how strong we are in Thee, and how vain are Satan's efforts where Thou art. "Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe."

That truly is Persecution which tries to draw us away from Thee, even if accompanied by soft speeches, or made up of pleasant doings.

151 Be Thou nigh at hand, O Lord: for all Thy commandments are true.

I know that when there has come from God some quickening of the soul, as after some more than usually happy communion, then the powers of evil raise themselves up, and strengthen themselves in their wicked plans. Therefore do I pray, and that earnestly, this prayer, "Be Thou nigh at hand, O Lord."

"For all Thy commandments are true."

But I am helpless without Thee to keep any one of them, even the least. In whatsoever direction the Evil One may seek to lead me, whether it be to the breaking of this or that commandment, to the neglecting of this or that duty, as all are true, be Thou nigh at hand to help in all, that I may keep all, and so glorify Thy Holy Name.

152 As concerning Thy testimonies, I have known long since: that Thou hast grounded them for ever.

"Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away;" so in Thine own Person didst Thou confirm the word Thou hadst before spoken by Thy prophet.

Yet not by inspiration only, nor yet in the full assurance of faith, but out of his own personal experience, God's servant here speaks. He had tried the word, and proved it true: he had sown, and in due time he had reaped. And will it not be so with me also? Yea, most surely. Thou art now what Thou wast then, and wilt be for ever:

Thou canst not deny Thyself. Only let me hold on, only let me work on, seeing no fruit, if such be Thy will, content that it should be so:

"In the end it will all prove well,
At even time there shall be light."

153 O consider mine adversity, and deliver me: for I do not forget Thy law.

This seems to mean, I do not betake myself to any wrong course, whereby to escape from the troubles which have come upon me. Our Lord, when tempted in His hunger to command the stones to become bread, but refusing, will illustrate this view of the verse.

But the verse tells us, not only that God's servant abstained from all sinful ways of deliverance, it tells us also how we may obtain the deliverance we seek. He would not do wrong to obtain deliverance, yet he would be delivered: he would be delivered, but he could not deliver himself: One alone could; to Him he said: "Thou art my Helper and Redeemer, make no long tarrying O my God." So also will I.

154 Avenge Thou my cause, and deliver me: quicken me, according to Thy word.

"Avenge thou my cause, and deliver me." So spake David to Saul: "The Lord judge between me and thee, and see and plead my cause, and deliver me out of thy hand." So also He (of Whom David was a type, his Son and Lord) "committed Himself unto Him that judgeth righteously," when His enemies were bent on eating up His Flesh; and happy, oh how happy, is he whose cause is so just and true, so free from every possible doubt, that he can with sure loving confidence leave it in his Almighty Father's Hand, and himself do nothing, charity not requiring any action from him.

"Quicken me, according to Thy word."

We may perhaps thus understand this prayer: It is hard, it needs great grace to sit still and leave ourselves with quiet confidence in God's Hand, when our very nature moves us to avenge ourselves by action; it is harder still, and needs greater grace, to abstain from doing so by word or even by a look: give me, O my God, this greater

grace, to be even as Thy Blessed Son our Saviour.

155 Health is far from the ungodly: for they regard not Thy statutes.

"Health," that is, well-being in the soul; and this implies sound faith, well-grounded hope, true love for God and man. These are far from the ungodly, because they are ungodly; because the way to obtain these precious graces from God's mercy, and to grow in them, is by keeping the commandments, to which the ungodly pay no heed.

There are those who are of sound faith, who do live in the hope of God's mercy through Christ, who are striving to "live a godly, righteous, and sober life;" and yet their daily confession is, "There is no health in us." In their case, therefore, the word "health" must mean no well-being of themselves, or apart from Christ our Hope. And this confession, God helping me, I will make as long as I have any being; yea, in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment will I say, "Apart from Thee, O Jesu, I have no hope; between me and my sins do I put Thy merits, only Thine;" and that I may be

enabled so to confess, I will now have regard unto Thy statutes with my whole heart.

156 Great is Thy mercy, O Lord: quicken me, as Thou art wont.

Great indeed is the mercy which has given me, a sinner (and what a sinner Thou knowest), grace to confess with my whole soul, that out of Thy Christ that soul hath not, cannot have health.

But besides this reference to the preceding verse, we may see a yet deeper meaning in these words: they lead us to the thought, "surely mercy and goodness have followed me all the days of my life;" mercy and goodness so exceeding, that they could have flowed only from Thee O Lord God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

"Quicken me, as Thou art wont."

This may be taken to mean, quicken me, move me, enable me to shew by my full trust in Thee, by my full belief in the greatness of Thy mercy, and by my willing self-denial in all things that I may please Thee, my thankfulness for Thy many and manifold mercies to me.

157 Many there are that trouble me, and persecute me: yet do I not swerve from Thy testimonies.

Many troubling, many persecuting: how very sadly true of Thine earthly life, O Jesus.

True also of Thy truest servants, yet teach us all ever to bear in mind, "Blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness sake," and enable each of us to say, "yet do I not swerve from Thy testimonies."

I learn from this verse,—

1. That the enemies of my soul are many; many are the ways of the world, which are not Thy ways; varied are the sinful lusts of the flesh; legions are there of devils.

2. That all these are leagued together to accomplish my ruin for ever and ever.

3. That as Thy servant did, so Thy servants can, withstand them all and overcome them, but only when clothed in the whole armour of God, and in God's strength.

"Let them be ashamed and confounded together that seek after my soul to destroy it; let them be driven backward and put to rebuke that wish me evil: but let Thy servant rejoice and be glad."

158 It grieveth me when I see the transgressors: because they keep not Thy law.

The Lord said, "Go through the midst of the city, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof:" and to the other He said, "Go ye after him, and smite, let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity — slay utterly — but come not near any man upon whom is the mark[a]."

Hence, surely, we believe that there is a special blessing, a special protection, a special mercy promised to them who sigh and cry for the sins of others,—"Blessed are they that mourn," not only their own sins many and manifold, but also the sins of others.

"Samuel came no more to see Saul, until the day of his death: nevertheless Samuel mourned for Saul."

159 Consider, O Lord, how I love Thy commandments: O quicken me, according to Thy loving-kindness.

The Psalmist did not fear to own, in his confessions to God, the great things God

[a] Ezekiel ix. 4—6.

had done in him, or by him, for he bore in mind that whatever good God may have seen in him, or done by him, was the fruit of the grace which He had given and nourished; but knowing that he must not rest, but "go on unto perfection," he adds immediately the prayer, "O quicken me according to Thy loving-kindness."

And this prayer we may take to mean, "Give me a yet larger measure of Thy grace, a measure according to Thine own love, a measure worthy of Thyself; and especially the grace of perseverance."

Even so would I acknowledge, O my God, that whatsoever good Thou mayest see in me is wholly Thine: that it would have been much more had I not marred Thy gracious purposes, and failed to act up to Thy will. But still help me in Thy love, for Jesu's sake, that I may become more fruitful in every good word and work, to Thy honour and glory.

160 Thy word is true from everlasting: all the judgments of Thy righteousness endure for evermore.

Besides the evident truth contained in this verse, namely, the eternity of God's truth

and righteousness, there may be a reference to the verse before. The words may mean, "If others cannot find that good in themselves which they may acknowledge as Thy working in them, to Thy glory, the fault is not in Thee; the promise of Thy grace has never failed, can never fail, unless we ourselves fail Thee: even as Thou Thyself art from everlasting to everlasting, O Lord my God, my holy One.

161 Princes have persecuted me without a cause: but my heart standeth in awe of Thy word.

Thus was David persecuted "without a cause" by Saul; yet when the persecutor was at his mercy in the cave, he abstained from all avenging of himself, because he feared God in his heart [t].

And if at any time it should be God's will that I should be exposed to persecution from men (Satan is always persecuting), from this verse I learn that it behoves me to see,—

1. That my life be such that the persecution shall be unjust, "without a cause."

2. That my heart stand in awe of God:

[t] 1 Sam. xxiv. 4—6.

that is, as I understand the words here, that I abstain wholly from any approach to retaliation; that I do nothing, say nothing, think nothing which will hinder my committing myself and my cause into God's hand: never forgetting to commend my persecutors to His mercy, if so be He will give them repentance unto salvation.

"That Thou mayest take the matter into Thy hand, the poor committeth himself unto Thee."

162 I am as glad of Thy word: as one that findeth great spoils.

Of having been given Thy written word: of having received the Incarnate Word—the "Meat indeed," the "Drink indeed."

But besides this obvious meaning of the verse, it may be connected with the preceding, and understood as assuring us that if we act on the principle of returning good for evil, it will one day prove our real comfort and joy. Jesus prayed for His murderers—and after His example, the first martyr, S. Stephen.

163 As for lies, I hate and abhor them: but Thy law do I love.

There are lies which men think no great

evil—lies about Thee, O God, about Thy nature, and Thine attributes, and Thy will. Yet Thy word saith, "Who is a liar but he that believeth not that Jesus is Christ?" and here Thy servant, for our example, saith of all lies, whether of Thee, or of men, or of the world, "I hate and abhor them." Nor is it Thy servant only who saith it, but Thou Thyself, speaking by him.

O that we may all "love the truth and peace," the "wisdom which is first pure, then peaceable:" and that we may love it, may we love to do Thy will, for so wilt Thou teach us of Thy doctrine[u]: and concerning doctrine, what is Thy will? Surely, that we reverently and thankfully "hear the Church," "the pillar and ground of the truth," "against which the gates of hell shall not prevail."

164 Seven times a day do I praise Thee: because of Thy righteous judgments.

"Seven times" by formal acts of praise, though doubtless seventy times seven indirectly, by his life.

This suggests the question: Do I praise God as I ought? do I look upon praise as

[u] St. John vii. 17.

a duty and a privilege, quite as much, and as really as prayer?

For how numberless, and how ever new, are the calls to praise:—

"New every morning is the love
Our wakening and uprising prove,
Through sleep and darkness safely brought,
Restored to life, and power, and thought:
New mercies each returning day
Hover around us while we pray;
New perils past, new sins forgiven,
New thoughts of God, new hopes of Heaven."

"I will praise my God, while I have my being." This was a Saint's resolve.

165 Great is the peace that they have who love Thy law: and they are not offended at it.

Great, for the guiding their feet into the way of peace, unto Him Who is "our Peace" is Thy doing: and this great peace which Thy children have even now, is a pledge of their being for ever with Thee: only abide Thou with them and me.

"And they are not offended at it."

As some were who "stumbled at the word,"

because they were disobedient to it: as the Jews were "offended at" the Word Himself, because of His lowly birth into the world, even so now are men offended at the truth, and stumble at it, and refuse it, because they love their own selves, not Thee.

It is not so with Thy true children: they are sure that Thy word is true, that it must be right, that one day they will know it to be so, because with true and living faith they have received it.

Lord, increase our faith in Thee, in the ordinances of the Catholic Church, and in Thy Word, that we may come to love them more and more, and to be filled with great peace.

166 Lord, I have looked for Thy saving health: and done after Thy commandments.

"Thy saving health," what but Thyself, O Lord Jesu, and Thy salvation? So the soul of Jacob brake forth in the midst of his great prophecy: "I have waited for Thy salvation." So, too, the souls of the many prophets, and kings, and righteous men. Truly, these saints had learned that the world was vain and unsatisfying, that Thou

alone wert to be desired, Thou the True, the Real, the Lasting.

Happy they who are so weaned from earth: Help me, O my God, until "my soul is even as a weaned child."

The whole verse illustrates the harmony between the Old and New Testaments. "I have looked for Thy saving health," here is faith and hope: and "done after Thy commandments," here is charity, the love which is the fulfilling of the law.

I learn from it:—

1. That the looking for Christ which will prove happy, is that which is accompanied by obedience to His will. Our loins must be girded, and our lamps burning, while we are waiting, if we are to be able and willing to open to Him immediately.

2. That our lives should be "after Thy commandments," that is, ordered according to the principle of God's commandments, and not only a mere following of the letter.

3. That even then we must wholly rest on God Himself.

167 My soul hath kept Thy testimonies: and loved them exceedingly.

The primary meaning of these words is

clear: but there is a second meaning very much to be observed, "my soul hath kept Thy testimonies," and the *result has been* that I have come to "love them," and that "exceedingly." He began by keeping the testimonies, and God led him on to love them, and loving them, he loved Him Who gave them.

"My soul hath kept" them; His obedience was earnest, true, generous, loving; and the reward followed, as it ever will follow, from Thy patient love, O Lord.

*** 168 I have kept Thy commandments and testimonies: for all my ways are before Thee.**

"Thy commandments" and "testimonies:" taking the word "testimonies" to mean the truths God has made known to us, the two words together will mean our three baptismal promises: these, the substance of all our duties, do I keep, because "Thou art about my path, and about my bed, and spiest out all my ways."

O my God, would that from my youth upward I had set this solemn truth before me, "that all my ways are before Thee;" that

"to Thee the darkness and light are both alike;" that from Thee "no secrets are hid:" would that even now I brought it more often, more thoughtfully to mind, in my daily doings, in my plans, and hopes, and thoughts; for surely it would be a power of God unto salvation. Help me, O my Father, help me.

169 Let my complaint come before Thee, O Lord: give me understanding, according to Thy word.

Of what shall I complain? what ground have I to complain of anything? I, a sinner, to Thee, the absolute and all-holy Master? To my Master I will not complain, to my Father I will; I will complain of myself; of the coldness of my heart; of the power which the world and the flesh still have over me; of the cowardly fear of God which still possesses me, which tells me how very far I yet am from loving as I ought[x]. Of this I will complain, and let my complaint enter into Thine ears, that Thou mayest be moved to help me.

And to my complaint I will add my prayer, "give me understanding," as Thou hast pro-

[x] 1 S. John iv. 18.

mised, that I may know how to draw nearer to Thee, how to become more like Thee, and less unworthy of Thine unwearied loving-kindness.

170 Let my supplication come before Thee: deliver me, according to Thy word.

As, if ever I pray as I ought, it is by Thy grace, O God; so is it of Thy mercy, Thy mercy in Jesus, that I hope to be heard. "*Let* my supplication come before Thee." And if it does come "before Thee," there will I leave it, and wait with quiet, well-grounded trust; for He, in Whom and through Whom it was offered, hath said: "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My Name, I will do it."

According, then, to this Thy promise, "deliver me." From what? "From evil."

1. From the Evil One.
2. From the evil within myself.
3. From this present evil world.

"Deliver me from mine enemies, O God: defend me from them that rise up against me."

171 My lips shall speak of Thy praise: when Thou hast taught me Thy statutes.

Often before in the course of this long

Psalm, has Thy servant prayed that Thou wouldst teach him: now, confident that Thou wilt do so, he promises praise when Thou hast done so.

"When *Thou* hast taught me;" for while I seek as I ought, teaching from all whom Thou hast given as teachers, whether men, or books, or nature; still I know that Thou, and Thou alone, art the heart-Teacher.

And "when Thou hast taught me," it shall be Thy praise, that to me, even to me, Thou hast been so good and gracious; and this my lips shall declare, yea, and my life.

172 Yea, my tongue shall sing of Thy word: for all Thy commandments are righteous.

There is a more joyous tone about this than about the preceding verse: there it was "shall speak," here it is "shall sing:" it is as if the Psalmist felt that his confidence that Thou wouldst hear his prayer, had been already blest, and he had been taught Thy Word; therefore of Thy Word will he sing, that is, of Thy commandments, and their righteous character.

Righteous are they in themselves, O God,

because they come from Thee: righteous also because, obeying them in Thee and for Thee, makes us righteous, partakers of "the Lord our Righteousness."

"Righteous art Thou, O Lord: and true is Thy judgment; the testimonies that Thou hast commanded are exceeding righteous and true."

173 Let Thine hand help me: for I have chosen Thy commandments.

They are "that good part" which endureth for ever, therefore did the Psalmist choose them: therefore, O my God, would I also, through Thy grace, abide with Thee in loving faith and obedience. But let Him help me—Him, Thy Hand, Thy Son, my Lord and my God.

"We have no refuge; none on earth to aid us,
Save Thee, O Father, Who Thine own hast made us:
But Thy blest presence will not leave them lonely
Who seek Thee only."

But the holy Angels may also be called God's hands in some lower sense.

"Pray then that angel ministries may stand
To gird thy loins, to arm thy feeble hand,
To prompt to holy thoughts, to urge the way
Of lowly duty, when thy thoughts would stray;
To guide thy feet in paths thy Saviour trod,
And lead through blest obedience to thy God."

174 I have longed for Thy saving health, O Lord: and in Thy law is my delight.

So the holy Church, and her true-hearted children,—"we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." So the last of the Apostles, in his old age, and in banishment,—"Even so come Lord Jesus:" and all in response to the word, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."

And their filling here in this world is "delight in Thy law;" as for what it will be, "eye hath not seen."

That I may hunger and be filled, and yet long for more, even Thyself, help me now to empty my soul of its lingering love of this world; and this, by setting Thee "always before me," and what Thou wouldst have me to do, and how Thou willest it done.

They who come to delight in God's law,

will beyond all others long for Jesus, knowing how much they need to have supplied, how much made perfect, which He alone can do.

175 O let my soul live, and it shall praise Thee: and Thy judgments shall help me.

"O let my soul live."

Truly the prayer of the Saint, for it is the prayer of humility; the prayer they will be most ready to offer, who know the Lord Jesus and themselves. "Cast me not away from Thy Presence," for Thou art my Life. "God be merciful to me a sinner."

"And it shall praise Thee," and Thee only, O Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and that for ever. Meanwhile, "Thy judgments shall help me."

They will quicken my faith, strengthen my hope, deepen my repentance, be a restraining curb upon my passions: for they are Thy judgments, Thou God of truth and love, revealed for my help.

176 I have gone astray like a sheep that is lost: O seek Thy servant, for I do not forget Thy commandments.

We have now at the very end of this long Psalm,—1. A confession of sin:

"I have gone astray like a sheep that is lost."

2. A profession of faith in the unwearied love of the Good Shepherd:

"O seek Thy servant."

3. A resolve so stedfast, that it fears not to put itself under the heart-searching Eye:

"I do not forget Thy commandments."

So would I live my days, O my God, so lie down to sleep when the end comes.

"O seek me tender Shepherd, lest I die,
Or from Thee farther roam;
In pity heed Thy wanderer's heart-wrung cry,
And lead me safely home."

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